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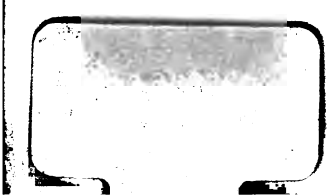

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HE RAISED THE BALL IN HIS ARMS, AND PLACED IT OVER THE CHALK MARK.

THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN

A Story of College Football

BY

LESTER CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF "THE RIVAL PITCHERS," "A QUARTER-BACK'S PLUCK," "BATTING TO WIN," ETC.

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A Story of College Baseball

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A Story of College Football

BATTING TO WIN
A Story of College Baseball

THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN
A Story of College Football

(Other volumes in preparation)

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THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN

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THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN

CHAPTER I

A MYSTERY

"GREAT Cicero's ghost!"

That was Tom Parson's exclamation.

"It's gone!"

A horrified gasp from Sid Henderson.

"Who took it?"

That was what Phil Clinton wanted to know.

Then the three college chums, who had paused on the threshold of their room, almost spellbound at the astounding discovery they had made, advanced into the apartment, as if unable to believe what was only too evident. Tom came to a halt near his bed, and gazed warily around.

"It's sure enough gone," he went on, with a long breath.

"Somebody pinch me to see if I'm dreaming," begged Sid, and Phil gave him such a vigorous nip on the fleshy part of his leg that the tall youth howled.

"Turn over; you're on your back," advised Tom, as he got down on his hands and knees to peer under the beds.

"What are you looking for?" demanded Phil.

"Our old armchair, of course. I thought maybe some of the fellows had been in here trying to be funny, and had hidden it. But it isn't here—it's gone."

"As if it could be under a bed!" exploded Sid, rubbing his leg reflectively. "You must be getting batty!"

"Maybe he thought it could be reduced to fractions or acted on by chemicals, like some of the stuff in the laboratory test tubes," went on Phil.

"That's all right!" fired back the varsity pitcher, rather sharply, "it's gone, isn't it? Our old armchair, that stood by us, and——"

"And on which *we* stood when we couldn't find the stepladder," interrupted Phil.

"Oh, quit your kidding!" expostulated Tom. "The old chair's gone; isn't it?"

"You never said a truer word in all your life, my boy," declared Sid, more gravely.

"Sort of queer, too," declared Phil. "It was here when we went out to football practice, and now——"

"Well, all I've got to say is that I'd like to find the fellow who took it!" broke out Tom, dramat-

ically. "I'd make a complaint to the proctor about him."

"Oh, you wouldn't do that; would you, Tom?" and Phil Clinton stepped over to a creaking old sofa, and peered behind it, brushing up against it, and causing a cloud of dust to blow out about the room. "You wouldn't do that, Tom. Why, it isn't Randall spirit to go to the authorities with any of our troubles that can be settled otherwise."

"But this isn't an ordinary trouble!" cried the pitcher. "Our old chair has been taken, and I'm going to find out who's got it. When I do——"

He clenched his fists suggestively, and began to strip off his football togs, preparatory to donning ordinary clothes.

"It isn't back there," announced Phil, as he leaned upright again, after a prolonged inspection behind the big sofa. "But there's a lot of truck there. I think I see my trigonometry." Getting down on his hands and knees, and reaching under the antiquated piece of furniture, he pulled out not one but several books.

"Oh, come out and let the stuff back of the sofa alone," suggested Tom. "We can clean that out some other time," for the big piece of furniture formed a convenient "catch-all" for whatever happened to be in the way of the lads. If there was anything they did not have any immediate use for, and for which room could not be found in,

or on, the "Chauffeurs," as Holly Cross used to call the chiffonniers, back of the sofa it went, until such time as the chums had an occasional room-cleaning. Then many long-lost articles were discovered.

"Yes, there's no use digging any more," added Sid. "Besides, the chair couldn't be there."

"Some of the fellows might have jammed it in back of the sofa, I thought," spoke Phil. "But say, this is serious. We can't get along without our chair!"

"I should say not," agreed Tom, who was almost dressed. "I'm going out scouting for it. Bascome, Delafield or some of those fresh sports may have taken it to get even with us."

"They knew we cared a lot for it," declared Sid. "Ever since we had that row about it with Langridge, the time we moved into these dormitories, some of the fellows have rigged us about it."

"If Langridge were here we could blame him, and come pretty near being right," was Phil's opinion. "But he's at Boxer Hall yet—at least, I suppose he is."

"Yes, he's on their eleven, too, I hear," added Tom. "But this sure is a mystery, fellows. That chair never walked away by itself. And it's too heavy and awkward for one fellow to carry alone. We've got to get busy and find it."

"We sure have," agreed Phil. "Why, the room looks bare without it; doesn't it?"

"Almost like a funeral," came mournfully from Sid, as he sank into the depths of the sofa. And then a silence fell upon the inseparable chums, a silence that seemed to fill the room, and which was broken only by the ticking of a fussy little alarm clock.

"Oh, hang it!" burst out Tom, as he loosened his tie and made the knot over. "I can't understand it! I'm going to see Wallops, the messenger. Maybe he saw some one sneaking around our rooms."

"If we once get on the trail——" said Phil, significantly.

"It sure is rotten luck," spoke Sid, from the depths of the sofa. "I don't have to do any boning to-night, and I was counting on sitting in that easy chair, and reading a swell detective yarn Holly Cross loaned me. Now—well, it's rotten luck—that's all."

"It certainly is!" agreed a voice at the door, as the portal opened to give admittance to Dan Woodhouse—otherwise Kindlings. "Rotten luck isn't the name for it. It's beastly! But how did you fellows hear the news?"

"How did we hear it?" demanded Tom. "Couldn't we see that it wasn't here as soon as we got in our room, a few minutes ago? But

how did you come to know of it? Say, Kindlings, you didn't have a hand in it, did you?" and Tom strode over toward the newcomer.

"Me have a hand in it? Why, great Cæsar's grandmother! Don't you suppose I'd have stopped it if I could? I can't for the life of me, though, understand where you heard it. Ed Kerr only told me ten minutes ago, and he said I was the first to know it."

"Ed Kerr!" gasped Phil. "Did he have a hand in taking our old chair?"

"Your chair?" gasped Dan. "Who in the world is talking about your fuzzy old chair?"

"Hold on!" cried Tom. "Don't you call our chair names, Kindlings, or——"

"Tell us how you heard about it," suggested Sid.

"Say, are you fellows crazy, or am I?" demanded Dan, looking about in curious bewilderment. "I come here with a piece of news, and I find you firing conundrums at me about a chair that I wouldn't sit in if you gave it to me."

"None of us is likely to sit in it now," spoke Phil, gloomily.

"Why not?" asked Dan.

"Because it's gone!" burst out Tom.

"Stolen," added Sid.

"Vanished into thin air," continued Phil.

"And if that isn't rotten luck, I don't know

what you'd call it," put in the pitcher, after a pause, long enough to allow the fact to sink into Dan's mind. "Isn't it?"

"Say, that's nothing to what I've got to tell you," spoke Dan. "Absolutely nothing. Talk about a fuzzy, musty, old second-hand chair missing! Why, do you fellows know that Ed Kerr is going to leave the football team?"

"Leave the eleven?" gasped Phil.

"What for?" cried Tom.

"Is that a joke?" inquired Sid.

"I only wish it were," declared Dan, gloomily. "It's only too true. Ed just got a telegram stating that his father is very ill, and has been ordered abroad to the German baths. Ed has to go with him. I was with him when he got the message, and he told me about it. Then he went to see Dr. Churchill, to arrange about leaving at once. That's the rottenest piece of luck Randall ever stacked up against. It's going to play hob with the team, just as we were getting in shape to do Boxer Hall and Fairview Institute. Talk about a missing chair! Why, it simply isn't in it!"

Once more a gloomy silence, at which the fussy little alarm clock seemed to rejoice exceedingly, for it had the stage to itself, and ticked on relentlessly.

CHAPTER II

MORE BAD NEWS

"AND so Ed is going to leave," mused Tom, after a momentous pause. "It sure will make a hole in the team."

"Oh, it's got me all broke up," gloomily declared Kindlings, who was captain of the recently organized eleven. "I don't know what I'm going to do to fill his place, and Mr. Lighton, while he says we'll make out somehow, feels pretty bad over it. But it can't be helped, of course, for Ed has to go."

For the time being, the news of the loss of one of Randall's best football players overshadowed the matter of the missing chair. Tom had changed his mind about going out to see if he could get on the trail of who had taken it, and sat with Kindlings and his two other chums, discussing what could be done to replace Kerr as right half-back.

"Bricktop Molloy might work in there," sug-

gested Phil, "only he's too good a tackle to take out of the line."

"Why can't you go there yourself, Phil?" asked Tom. "You've done some playing back of the line."

"No, I need Phil at quarter," objected Dan. "We'll have to think of something else. If I didn't need you at end, Tom, I'd try you in Ed's place."

"Oh, I'm no good bucking the line," objected the tall lad who pitched for the 'varsity nine.

"What's the matter with one of the Jersey Twins?" asked Sid.

"Both Jerry and Joe Jackson are too light," and Dan shook his head. There were many suggestions, and various expedients offered, and, while the discussion is under way perhaps a moment can be spared to make our new readers a little better acquainted with the main characters of this story.

In the initial volume of this "College Sports Series," entitled, "The Rival Pitchers," there was told the story of how Tom Parsons, a rather raw country lad, came to Randall College, made the 'varsity nine, and twirled the horsehide in some big games, thereby doing much to help win the pennant for Randall. He had an uphill fight, for Fred Langridge, a rich bully, contested with him for the place in the box, and nearly won out. There was fierce rivalry between them, not only

in baseball, but concerning a certain Miss Madge Tyler.

In the second volume, called "A Quarter-Back's Pluck," there was related how Phil Clinton went into the championship game under heavy odds, and how he won out, though his mind dwelt more on a fake telegram in his pocket, telling him that his mother was dying, than on the game, and on the players whom he at last piloted to victory.

A winter of study followed the games on the gridiron, and with the advent of spring, longing eyes were cast toward the baseball diamond whereon, as soon as it was dry enough, the Randall lads gathered to prepare for the season.

In the third book of the series, called "Batting to Win," there was told the story of how Randall triumphed over her rivals, though at first it looked as if she would lose. A loving cup had been offered, to be played for by members of the Tonoka Lake League, of which Randall College was a member, and how it was won forms the subject of the story.

Incidentally, there was quite a mystery concerning Sidney Henderson, or "Sid," as he was universally called. From the opening of the season his conduct was peculiar, and there were many unjust suspicions regarding him. It was not until near the end, when he had been barred from

the games, that the cause of his actions became known.

Then, at the last moment, when Randall was losing the final game of the series, which was a tie between her team and that of Boxer Hall, the ban was removed, Sid rushed upon the diamond, and batted to win.

The baseball season had closed, summer had come, and with it the long vacation. Now that was passed, and from mountains, lakes and seaside the students had come trooping back to Randall. All our old friends were on hand, and some new ones, whom we shall meet from time to time. As the weather became cool enough, the football squad had been put to work under the watchful eye of Captain Dan Woodhouse, and the coach, Mr. Lighton.

Before I go on with the story I want to add, for the benefit of new readers, a little bit of history about the college.

Randall was located in a town of the middle west, and not far from the institution ran Sunny River, a stream that afforded boating opportunities for the students. It emptied into Tonoka Lake, which body of water gave the name to the athletic league, made up of Randall, Boxer Hall, Fairview Institute,—the latter a co-educational place of learning,—and several other smaller academies. Haddonfield was the nearest town

to Randall College, and thither the lads went whenever chance afforded.

Venerable Dr. Albertus Churchill was the head of the college, and even though he was privately dubbed "Moses" by the lads, it was not in any spirit of disrespect, for they all loved and admired him. It was quite the contrary with Professor Emerson Tines, the "Latin dreadful," and when I state that he was called "Pitchfork," his character is indicated in a word. Hardly less disliked was Mr. Andrew Zane, the proctor, who seemed to have a sworn enmity against the lads. But they managed to have fun in spite of him. There were other members of the faculty, some liked and some disliked, and occasionally there were changes in the teaching staff.

As for Randall itself, it was a fairly large institution. There was the main building, at the head of a large campus. Off to the left was the athletic field, and somewhat to the rear was Booker Memorial chapel, the stained glass windows of which were worth going miles to see.

To the right of the college proper was Biology Hall, the endowment gift of an old graduate, and not far from that was the residence for the faculty. Directly in the rear of the main building were the dormitories, the east one for the freshmen and sophomores, and that on the west for the juniors and seniors.

As for the lads who attended Randall, you will meet more or less of them as this story progresses. Sufficient to say that Tom Parsons, Phil Clinton and Sid Henderson roomed together, being called the "inseparables." Among their friends they numbered many, Dan Woodhouse, Billy or "Dutch" Housenlager, "Bricktop" Molloy, Jerry and Joe Jackson, dubbed the "Jersey Twins," because they came from some town in the Garden State. Then there was "Snail" Looper, so called because of his propensity to prowl about in the dark; Pete Backus, nicknamed "Grasshopper," because he aspired to be a jumper; "Bean" Perkins, who could always be depended on to make a noise at a game, and many more.

There were some students not so friendly to our heroes, notably Fred Langridge, who, because of a serious scrape, had withdrawn from Randall and was now at Boxer Hall. Garvey Gerhart, his crony, who appeared in previous books, had also left, and Ford Fenton, whose uncle always formed a subject of boasting with him, because of the latter's former ability as a coach at Randall, was among the missing. For Ford played a mean trick on his classmates, and there was such a row raised over it that his relatives advised him to quit.

And now, I believe, you have met all, or nearly all the lads of whom I propose to tell you more.

Of course there were the girls, Miss Tyler, and Ruth Clinton—Phil's sister,—and Miss Mabel Harrison, who attended Fairview. I will introduce them more particularly in due season.

"Say, how can you fellows stand that?" asked Dan, after a pause, during which they had all done much thinking.

"Stand what?" asked Tom, starting out of a day dream, in which thoughts over the loss of the chair and the loss of Kerr on the football team were mingled.

"That clock. It gives me the fidgets," and Kindlings grabbing a book, made as if to throw it at the timepiece.

With a quick motion, Phil stopped him, and the volume fell harmlessly to the floor.

"It doesn't give you a chance to catch your breath," went on the football captain. "Always seems to want you to hurry-up."

"I wish it would make Sid hurry-up some mornings, when the chapel bell rings," remarked Tom. "The frowsy old misogynist—the troglodyte—lies abed until the last minute. It would take more than that clock to get *him* up."

"Slanderer!" crooned Sid, unconcernedly, from the depths of the sofa.

"No, but seriously," went on Dan. "I can't see how you stand it. It gives me the fidgets. It seems to say 'hurry-up—hurry-up—hurry-up—no-

time—no-time—no-time'! Jove! I'd get one of those old Grandfather clocks, if I were you. The kind that reminds one of an open fire, in a gloomy old library, with a nice book, and ticking away like this: 'tick——tock—tick——tock.' That's the kind of a clock to have. But that monstrosity——"

He simulated a shudder, and turned up his coat collar as if a wind was blowing down his back.

"Oh, you're just nervous worrying about what's going to happen to the football team," spoke Phil. "Cheer up, old man, the worst is yet to come. Suppose you'd been robbed of the finest armchair that ever you sat in——"

"Finest fiddlesticks!" burst out Dan. "That chair had spinal meningitis, I guess, or the dinkbots. Every time you sat in it you could tell how many springs there were in the seat and back without counting. Ugh!" and Dan rubbed his spine reflectively.

"But it's gone," went on Tom, "and I'd give a five-spot to know who took it. Come on, fellows, let's go scouting around and see if we can get on the trail of it. I'm glad they didn't take the clock or the sofa," and he gazed at the two remaining articles which formed the most cherished possessions of the inseparables. They had acquired the clock, chair and sofa some time before, purchasing them from a former student on

the occasion of their becoming roommates, and though they had since secured many new objects of virtu, their affections clung to these three originals.

Their room was a typical college lads' apartment, hung with sporting prints, boxing gloves, foils, masks, baseball bats, fishing rods, and in certain places, like honored shrines, were the pictures of pretty girls.

"Well, are you fellows coming?" asked Tom, as he started for the door.

"Where?" inquired Phil, who still had on his football suit.

"To hunt for the chair. It *must* be somewhere around the college. I think it was taken for a joke, and if it was by any freshmen I'll make 'em wish they'd never come to Randall."

"I'm with you!" cried Sid.

"Oh, let's stay and talk about what we're going to do for the eleven!" begged Dan. "But, for the love of cats, first stop that blamed clock, if you don't want me to go crazy!"

His objection was so evidently genuine, that Phil halted the ticking by the simple process of jabbing a toothpick in the slot of the timepiece regulator.

"That's better," observed Kindlings. "Now, about Ed Kerr, I think the best we can do is to——"

He got no further, for the door of the room was fairly burst open, and in came the Jersey Twins.

"Have you heard the news?" demanded Joe Jackson.

"The news?" echoed Jerry.

"Sure! We knew it first," said Phil. "You mean about our chair being stolen."

"Oh, hang your chair!" cried Dan.

"It's nothing about chairs," said Jerry, with a curious look.

"Not a word," came the echo.

"It's worse," went on Jerry.

"Much worse;" the echo.

"Oh, you mean about Ed Kerr having to leave," spoke Dan. "How'd you hear it so soon? It will be all over college to-night, I guess."

"Ed Kerr going to leave?" gasped Jerry.

"Ed Kerr?" also gasped the echoing brother.

"Yes. Is that what you came to tell us?" demanded Sid, as he got up from the sofa, not without some rather strenuous gymnastics, for once you sank into the soft depths, it was difficult to arise unaided.

"No, we don't know anything about Ed leaving," went on Jerry, as he looked from one to the other, "but Bricktop Molloy just told us that he was going to quit next week, and go to——"

"Bricktop going to leave!" gasped Dan. "More

bad news! Will it never stop raining!" and he clung heavily with his arms around Tom's neck.

"Say, is this straight?" demanded Phil, excitedly.

"Sure! Bricktop told us himself," answered Joe.

"Where's he going?" inquired Sid.

"To New York. Going to take a special post-graduate course at Columbia, he said. He's got a chance to get in with some big mining firm, and he's got to work up on a few special studies. Oh, Bricktop is going to leave all right."

"Then what's to become of the Randall football eleven?" demanded Dan, in a tragic voice. "Two of her best players going to leave, and hardly time enough to break other fellows into their places before the big games! Oh, fellows, this is sure beastly luck!"

CHAPTER III

ON THE TRAIL

OPPRESSIVE silence once more filled the room—a silence unbroken by the ticking of the clock this time, for it was mute, because of the toothpick. But its accusing face seemed to look at the three chums, as though begging to be allowed to speak, even if it did but mark the passage of time.

"Maybe we can prevail on Bricktop to stay until after the big game with Boxer Hall," suggested Tom, hopefully.

Jerry Jackson shook his head mournfully.

"I've tried it," he said. "I knew it would be a bad loss, so I asked Bricktop to stay, but he said his whole future depended on this chance, and he wouldn't feel that he was doing right if he let it slip."

"Talk about futures," murmured Dan, "what of the future of Randall?"

"It does seem sort of tough for Bricktop to leave just when we've all got so we play so well together," commented Sid. "And only to go to another college, too! It isn't like Ed, who has

to go with his sick father. I tell you Bricktop isn't doing right! He's deserting in the face of the enemy, for both Boxer Hall and Fairview are after our scalps this fall, because of the walloping we gave them last season. Bricktop's a deserter!"

"Oh, don't be ugly," begged Tom. "Maybe we don't know all the facts. I'm sure Bricktop wouldn't do anything mean."

"Oh, of course not," Sid hastened to say, "but you know what I mean. If Bricktop——"

"Who's takin' me name in vain?" demanded a voice at the door—a voice with just the hint of Irish brogue—and into the room was thrust a shock of auburn—not to say reddish—hair, which had gained for the owner the appellation of "Bricktop." "I say, who's desecratin' me reputation, of which I have but a shred left—who's tearin' down me character behind me back?" and Molloy, with a quick glance at his friends, entered and threw himself beside Sid on the sofa, thereby making the old piece of furniture creak most alarmingly.

"Easy! For cats' sake!" cried Sid, in alarm. "Do you want to deprive us of our only remaining consolation, now that the chair is gone?"

"Surely not," answered the Irish lad. "Captain, I salute thee," and Bricktop arose and bowed elaborately to Dan. "I gather from what I heard, as I made my entrance, that you have received

"ISN'T THERE PLENTY OF GOOD MATERIAL IN THE SCRUB?" ASKED SID.

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the unwelcome news, my captain," and, though Bricktop was smiling, there was a sober look in his blue eyes.

"Yes, we've heard it," answered Kindlings, shortly. "Is it true?"

"It is, my captain, and it's infernally sorry I am to have to confirm it. But I've got to go, and that right soon."

"Um!" murmured the captain. "Well, the sooner the quicker, I suppose. Kerr goes this week, also."

"What! Kerr going?" Bricktop was manifestly surprised.

"His father's sick—Europe—Ed's going with him," disjointedly declaimed Tom.

"Whew!" whistled the Irish lad. "Now I *sure* am sorry I'm leavin'. Not that I'm any better than any other player, my captain, but I know what it means to take two men out of the team at this late day."

"You're not throwing any bouquets at yourself," spoke Dan. "It's the worst blow Randall has had in a long time. We were just at the point where we had begun to gain ground after the long practice, and now——" he shrugged his shoulders.

"Is there no way you can stay on?" asked Phil, softly.

Bricktop shook his head.

"It means a big thing to me," he declared. "I

know it looks like desertin', as ye call it, but, fellows, believe me, I'm not. It—it goes to me heart as much as it does to yours," and Bricktop swallowed a big lump in his throat. When he was much affected he always "degenerated to the language of his forebears of the Emerald Isle," as he used to say. And he was much affected now—there was no doubt of that. "I wish I could stay—but I can't," he concluded, brokenly.

"Well, Randall will have to do the best she can," spoke Dan, after a pause, and with a heavy sigh.

"Isn't there plenty of good material in the scrub, and some in the Freshman eleven?" asked Sid.

"Oh, it isn't so much a question of material, as it is breaking them in," answered the captain. "The great fault with some of our playing in the past was that we didn't have team work. This season we have it, and after a lot of grind we fellows were playing together like one. Look how we walked away with Dodville Prep in the first game of the season. That showed what we could do. Now the team's going to be disrupted—two of the best men——"

"Thanks, captain," interrupted Bricktop, with a short laugh.

"I mean it," went on Kindlings, energetically. "Two of our best men leave, and it's almost too

late to get others to run with the team like the perfect machine it ought to be. But, we've got to do our best. Come on, Bricktop, we'll go see Mr. Lighton, and hear what he has to say."

"There are a couple of new fellows coming soon," remarked Joe Jackson, as he and his brother arose.

"Who are they?" asked Tom.

"One is Frank Simpson. I heard Bascome speaking of him the other day. He's played on some western eleven, I believe, and has quite a name."

"Yes, those western fellows are big and strong," put in Jerry Jackson.

"Oh, you can't tell anything about it," said Dan, despairingly. "A new fellow can't be broken in at this late day. I'll have to depend on some of the scrub. Who else is coming to Randall? Do either of you twins know?"

"I heard Proc. Zane talking to Moses about some new students who were going to enter," replied Jerry, "but Simpson is the only one whose name I heard mentioned."

"Come on, then," urged Dan. "We'll go see the coach. Maybe he has someone in mind, and you can stay on a few days and help break him in, Bricktop."

"Sure, I'll stay as long as I can," agreed the

Irish lad. "It ought to be easy to get someone to work in at left guard, where I play."

"We can't get anyone to beat you," spoke Dan, sincerely. "Well, I'm going."

"If you see our old armchair walking around the campus, send it home," requested Phil, earnestly.

"Sure!" chorused his chums.

"Seriously though, fellows," said Tom, when the delegation had left the room, "we've got to do something. Let's go out and make some inquiries. It was a nervy thing for anyone to do, to come in here and carry off our chair. I don't believe it was any freshmen."

"Neither do I," agreed Phil. "Wait until I dress and I'll be with you."

"Same here," added Sid.

"Oh, I can't wait!" cried Tom, impatiently. "I'll go out and see what I can learn. You fellows come when you get ready. We've got plenty of time before grub."

Tom's first act was to seek out Wallops, one of the assistant janitors, or messengers, about the college. From that youth he inquired whether he had seen anyone taking the chair away, or whether he had heard of it being removed in a joke.

"What, you mean that old big chair that was

so—so——" and Wallops hesitated, evidently in embarrassment.

"Yes, that's the one—the old rattletrap!" exclaimed Tom. "Don't be afraid to say it, Wallops. The chair was pretty well bunged up, but we think a lot of it, and we wouldn't have it lost for a good deal. Can you give us a clew?"

"Well, Mr. Parsons, I didn't see any one take it, but there was a second-hand dealer around the college to-day. He comes every once in a while, to buy up the things the students don't want any more. He was here, and he took away a wagon-load of stuff."

"He did!" cried Tom. "Why didn't you say so before? Was our chair on the wagon?"

"I didn't see that one, though he had some small chairs, and a bureau."

"Who was he? Where's his place? I'll go see him at once!" cried the pitcher. "I'll wager he sneaked in our room, and took it while we were out. Who was he?"

"Isaac Komsky," replied Wallops. "He has a second-hand store on Water street, in Haddonfield. But I don't think——"

"That's the fellow all right!" cried Tom, excitedly. "I'll make him give that chair up, if we have to tear his shop apart!" and he raced back to the room to tell his chums.

CHAPTER IV

ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE

"HELLO! What's up?" demanded Sid, as he and Phil, about to leave their apartment, were almost hurled from their feet when Tom burst in. "What in the name of the Gaelic Wars ails you, Tom? Has some one else left the team; or is the college on fire?"

"Yes, why this unseemly haste?" came from Phil, as he sank back on the sofa and endeavored to recover his breath, which was almost at the vanishing point because of the suddenness of his chum's advent.

"Haste? I guess you'd be in a hurry if you just heard what I did!" exploded Tom. "I'm on the track of our chair! What's the matter with you fellows, anyhow? I thought you were coming out and help me get on the trail of it."

"Oh, Sid had to look at Miss Harrison's picture before he could venture out," replied Phil, with a mocking grin at his chum. And then he dodged to escape a book, while Tom murmured:

"You old misogynist! And me working like a detective to get on the trail of our beloved chair! What kept you in, Phil?"

"Couldn't get his tie fixed to suit him," responded Sid, thus getting one in on the quarterback, who was rather noted for his taste in neck scarfs.

"Well, come on, now!" urged the pitcher. "We've got time enough to get to town and back before the 'eats,' and if we go now Proc. Zane won't be so apt to spot us."

"What's the game?" asked Sid.

"Second-hand Shylock has our chair," explained Tom briefly, as he told of the information Wallops had given him. "We'll go talk to him like a Dutch uncle, and make him tell how he dared come into our rooms while we were at practice. Come on!"

"The nerve of Komsky!" cried Phil. "I'm with you," and the three lads hurried from the college, crossed the campus, and were headed for a trolley that would take them to the village. They saw the car coming, and were about to sprint for it, when Tom became aware of the figure of a small, fussy little man striding toward them from behind a row of trees, holding up his hand as if to command a halt.

"Zane!" gasped the pitcher.

"The proctor," added Phil, in a whisper. "He hasn't any right to stop us now!"

But whether the official had the right or not, he was evidently going to exercise it, and our heroes thought it better to obey.

"Well, young gentlemen," began the proctor, as he strode up to the trio, "you are evidently going to the village."

"Yes, sir," answered Tom, meekly.

"There goes the car," remarked Sid in a low voice. "There won't be another for half an hour, and we'll sure be late for grub. Hang Zane, anyhow."

"May I ask how long you intend to remain?" went on the obnoxious college official.

"Not very long," answered Phil. "We are going on an errand. We didn't know it was against the rules not to leave the college grounds in daylight, Mr. Zane." It was a sarcastic reference to the many somewhat childish rules the proc was in the habit of framing up from time to time.

"There is no rule prohibiting students from leaving the grounds in daylight, Mr. Clinton," said the proctor, severely, "but the reason I stopped you is that I wish to point out that if you go to town now you will hardly be back in time for supper, and that means that you will probably get a meal in Haddonfield. Also, there is no set

rule against that, but Dr. Churchill does not like it. Staying to supper in the village might mean that you would stay later, and I need hardly point out that there *is* a rule about being out after hours. That is all," and the little proctor walked stiffly away.

"Well, wouldn't that get your goat!" murmured Tom, when the official was beyond hearing.

"I should say so; and also frizzle your back teeth," added Sid.

"Shall we go?" asked Phil, doubtfully.

"Of course," asserted Tom. "And we'll fool Zane, too. It won't take us long to have it out with Komsky. Then we can go to one of those quick-lunch places, have a bite, and get back to college in plenty of time before locking up. We can arrange to have an expressman bring back the chair."

"Good!" exclaimed Phil. "I was afraid you'd propose that we lug it back on the car, and while I'd do a good deal to get it again, I think we'd look foolish toting it home in our arms."

"Afraid of meeting some girls, I suppose," sneered Tom.

"Say, supposing Komsky hasn't got it," suggested Sid, while Phil blushed.

"Perish the thought!" cried the pitcher. "We've *got* to get our chair back, and if that

Shylock hasn't it some of the other second-hand dealers in town have."

They strolled along, talking of the chair, the chances for a good football team, and many other college matters until the next car came, when they hopped aboard, and were soon in Haddonfield.

"Vell, young gentlemans, vot is it? Somedings nice vor de college room, ain't it? Yes! No? Vell, Isaac Komsky has it vot effer you like, und cheap! So help me gracious, I lose money on everyt'ing I sell! Now, vot it is?"

Thus spoke the old second-hand dealer, when our three friends entered. Eagerly he had come forward, rubbing his hands and wagging his long, matted beard, while from under bushy eyebrows he peered at them with eager orbs.

"We're looking for a chair, Komsky," said Tom, brusquely. "A nice, easy, soft, comfortable chair that we can sit in."

"Oh, so! An easy chair is it? Vell, I haf many, und cheap! It is a shame about de cheapness. Look, here is one, vot is so—vot you call—easy, dot it vould make you schleepy efen ven you looket at it, ain't it?"

He thrust forward a most uncomfortable wooden rocker, with gaudy cushions on the seat and back. The cushions were in Randall colors—yellow and maroon—and the chair had evidently been sold by some student, either because he

needed the money or because he could afford better furniture.

"No, that's not the kind we want," said Tom, whose eyes were roving about the cluttered-up shop. He and his chums had decided on the course of pretending to want to buy a chair, with the idea that if Komsky had taken theirs, by hook or crook, he would be more apt to show it if he saw prospective customers, than if he knew they had come demanding their rights. "We want an easier chair," went on Tom.

"Oh, an easier vun? Den I haf it. See!" and he brought to light a big Turkish rocker, that was in the last stages of decay.

Meanwhile Sid and Phil had been strolling about, leaving Tom to engage Komsky in conversation. The two looked in many corners, and peered under heaps of furniture, but they did not see their chair. Nor, if the dealer had it, did he show any desire to produce it. Tom looked at rocker after rocker that was brought out, and at last, convinced that his method was likely to prove a failure, he boldly stated the case, and demanded to know, whether by mistake or otherwise, the dealer had taken their old relic.

The surprise of Mr. Komsky was pitiful to observe. He all but tore out his beard, and called upon his ancestors as far back as the sixteenth generation to witness that he had not even seen

the chair. He was an honest man, he was a poor man, he was a man born to poverty and under an unlucky star, but never, never, *never!* not if you were to give him a million dollars, would he take a chair from a student's room, without permission.

"For vy should I, ven I can buys dem efery day?" he demanded, with a pathetic gesture of his forward-thrust hands.

"Well, I guess it isn't here," spoke Tom, regretfully, when they had exhausted all the possibilities. "Yet you were at college to-day, Komsky."

"Vy, sure I vos at der college to-day. Nearly efery veek I am there, ain't it? Yet I have not your chair."

It was evident that he was telling the truth. He did not have the chair then, though he might have had it, and have sold it to some other student, perhaps one from Boxer Hall or Fairview, for those lads also patronized the second-hand dealers, and Komsky was one of the largest.

"Cæsar's grandmother!" cried Tom, in dismay, as this possibility suggested itself, "just suppose Langridge or some of those chaps had our chair! Say, maybe Langridge put up the game!"

"Hardly possible," asserted Phil. "Come on, we'll have a look in some of the other shops, then

we'll get grub and hurry back. I think I saw drops of blood in Zane's eye."

"He sure *would* like to get our names down in his little book," said Sid.

But a round of the other second-hand dealers, where inquiries were made, developed nothing. There were many easy chairs on sale, but that of our heroes was not to be seen, and sorrowfully they returned to the college.

It was long past the regular supper time, but they had satisfied their hunger in Haddonfield. And, in spite of their troubles—their worriment over the chair, and the mix-up that was sure to result in the football team—they had managed to eat a good meal.

They saw Proctor Zane, as they strolled up over the campus, and the official glanced sharply at them.

"He's just wishing we were coming in late," declared Tom.

"I believe you," assented Phil.

They entered their room, stumbling in the darkness over books and chairs, for they never took the trouble to put their apartment to rights.

"I say, strike a light, some one!" exclaimed Tom, rubbing his shins where they had come in contact with a chair.

There was a click as Phil turned the electric switch, and the incandescent glowed. For a mo-

ment the three chums stood in the middle of the room, gazing at each other.

"Doesn't it seem lonesome without the old chair," spoke Phil at length.

"Sort of makes the room look bigger though," declared Sid, as he threw himself on the sofa. It was a poor consolation at best.

"I can't imagine what has become of it," said Tom, as he proceeded to get into some lounging clothes.

"Well, now for some boning, and maybe we'll forget our troubles," went on Phil, as he scattered a pile of books, looking for his own.

"Are you going to the football meeting tonight?" asked Tom, as he finished a hurried toilet, for a session of the squad had been called late that afternoon to consider the loss of Kerr and Molloy.

"I may come over later," spoke Phil. "I think the best thing we can do is to——"

He paused suddenly, and glanced quickly toward the shelf that served as a mantle. The gaze of his chums followed. The room seemed suddenly to become oppressively still. They could almost hear each other breathing. Then the same thought came to all three.

"The clock!" they exclaimed in a tragic chorus.

"It's gone!" gasped Tom.

"Vanished!" added Phil, staring at the vacant

space as though unable or unwilling to believe the evidence of his eyesight.

"Another mysterious disappearance," exploded Sid, and then Tom remarked in significant tones:

"I guess we'll have to chain the sofa if we want to keep that!"

CHAPTER V

FOOTBALL TALK

"FELLOWS, there is just one thing about it," announced Tom, firmly, when a hurried search of the room had only made it more certain that the clock was nowhere in it, "either we are the victims of a practical joke, or there is some mystery here that we will have to fathom."

"I'm inclined to think it's a joke," said Phil.

"Same here," agreed Sid, "only it's a pretty poor sort of a joke. First thing we know we won't have anything left," and he looked down at the sofa on which he was stretched out, as if to make sure that it would not take wings unto itself, and fly out of the window.

"Was the room locked?" asked Phil.

"Sure," spoke Tom. "Whoever came in must have used a false key."

"They're taking lots of risks," was Sid's opinion. "How could they tell but what we'd come back any minute and catch them red-handed?"

"Well, this is no joke," insisted Tom. "We've

got to do something. It's too much to have the chair and clock disappear the same day. I'm going to post a notice on the bulletin board, stating that the person who took them is known, and had better return them at once to avoid further trouble. That's how the ladies advertise in the newspaper when they don't know who took their best umbrella at a society meeting. I'll write out a notice."

"No, don't!" urged Phil, quickly.

"Why not?"

"Because I think this thing is a joke on us, and the more fuss we make over it the more they'll laugh at us. Bascome, or some of that crowd, have had their fingers in this pie, and it's up to us to find out how they did it, and what became of our things. Now, let's work around quietly, get the evidence we need, get back the things if possible, and have the ha-ha on them."

"Good idea," commented Sid.

"I believe you *are* right," agreed Tom, after thinking the matter over. "We'll keep quiet about it. Now let's get through with our boning, and go to the football meeting. They'll expect us, and, really, it's a serious matter. Randall has got to wake up considerably if she wants the championship this year."

The meeting was held in the gymnasium, and was pretty well under way when our three friends

arrived. Ed Kerr was not present, as he had to get ready for his trip to Europe, but Bricktop was on hand, and it required all his Irish wit to stand off the many appeals that were made to him not to desert in the face of trouble.

There were tears in the eyes of the big left guard as he announced that his decision was final, and that he must leave for Columbia in two weeks.

"I'd like to stay and play in the first big game against Newkirk College," Bricktop said brokenly, "but it's impossible, me lads."

"Then we'd better get busy and consider how we're going to make up the team," declared Dan Woodhouse, and when the captain thus gave up hope of keeping Bricktop, his fellow players did likewise.

"Yes," said Mr. Lighton, the coach, "we have none too much time to get at our team work in view of the changes. Now, Woodhouse, we'll hear what you have to say."

"Wait until I make out a list, and do some thinking," spoke the captain, and while he retired to a comparatively quiet corner to do this, the coach gave the lads a little informal talk on the science of the game.

Mr. Lighton illustrated several points. He showed how the guards and tackle could best work together to hold the line with the centre, he impressed on the ends the necessity for speed in

getting down the field. To the backs he talked of the need for being ready to get into action on the jump, to take advantage of the holes made for them.

"We have decided to play a game consisting of two halves instead of the four quarters," said the coach. "It is more satisfactory, I think. Of course, there is a certain advantage in three rest periods instead of one, but I believe that a faster, snappier game can be played by halves than by quarters. You don't run the chance of getting stiff, and you can keep limbered and warmed up."

"What about the forward pass?" asked Phil Clinton.

"I don't know that we will work that so much as we did last year," said the coach, "but of course we will have to be guided by what our opponents do in the games. That will be something for the captain and the quarter-back to work out together. Of course we'll practice it."

"Onside kicks," came suddenly from Sid, who had been somewhat quiet. "Are we going to do anything with them?"

"That is another matter that will have to be settled when you play the games," declared the coach. "It will do no harm to try them. I'm for straight football, as near the old-fashioned sort as we can get it under the new rules. We have had some hard practice, and we'll have more, for practice

is what you will need in team work, especially if we have two new players. Now has the captain anything to report?"

"Well," remarked Kindlings, coming from his corner, with a puzzled look on his face, "it isn't so easy as you would think, and I just want to say that I hope no fellows feel badly because I don't select them in place of Kerr and Molloy."

"Sure not," came in a chorus.

" 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! for Randall!" yelled Bean Perkins in his loudest grandstand voice. "Wow!"

"Can some of that, and save it for the Newkirk game," suggested Woodhouse, with a grin. "Now I've thought it all over, and I've decided that I'll put Sam Looper in Bricktop's place at left guard, and——"

" 'Rah for the Snail!" shouted the irrepressible Bean.

"Oh, I can be quick enough when I want to," declared Sam, his face shining with delight at the honor that had come to him unsought. He had practiced hard on the scrub, and while he was not a bright and shining light, he had grit and stamina, and was very strong. There were some doubtful looks over his selection, but everyone was willing to admit that while he was not as good as Bricktop, he might do after some gruelling practice.

"And to fill Kerr's place I'll name Pete Backus," went on the captain.

" 'Rah for Grasshopper!" cried Bean. "He'll jump over their heads and make a touchdown."

"Quiet!" begged Mr. Lighton, for there was a pandemonium of yells and laughter at this.

"And I want Pete to jump into plays when he has the ball," continued Kindlings. "Do you approve of those selections, Mr. Lighton?"

"Certainly, Woodhouse. I only want to say that of course it all depends on how these new candidates make out in practice."

"Oh, sure," assented the captain. "They've got to make good, or we'll put some one else in. You understand that, Pete and Sam."

"Of course," they murmured, and each secretly determined to leave nothing untried that would win for him the coveted honor of playing on the 'varsity eleven.

"Then everybody be on hand for practice on the gridiron at three o'clock sharp to-morrow," announced Kindlings. "We'll run through some hard plays, do some passing and tackling, and play a fifteen minute half against the scrub. Sharp work, everybody!"

" 'Rah for Kindlings!" yelled Bean, and the shout that followed, if it did not exactly raise the roof of the gymnasium, at least testified to the regard in which the captain was held.

There was more talk from Mr. Lighton, who had worked out a new system of signals for the present season, and he gave the lads a short drill in it before the meeting adjourned.

Meanwhile Phil, Tom and Sid had been keeping their ears on the alert, and their eyes open for any hint, in talk or action, that would give them a clew to who had taken their chair and clock. But they were not successful. If any of the football squad was guilty, the fact was successfully concealed.

CHAPTER VI

IN PRACTICE

THERE was a crisping tang in the air. The wind had in it just the hint of winter, but the sun shone bravely down and glinted on the green grass of the football field—a field marked off in white lines, so meaningless to one not familiar with the game, yet so full of meaning to a player.

Soon what a struggle there would be to cross those same white lines—especially the last, whereon were the goal posts, and to gain which every last ounce of strength, every atom of breath, every nerve and sinew that could be urged to lend speed to the runner would be called upon to do the utmost that the ball might be shoved over for a touchdown.

Now, however, the gridiron of Randall College lay peaceful and quiet under the October sun. The grass seemed to shiver in the breeze, as if in anticipation of the struggles it would soon have to bear.

The silent grandstands were but waiting the cheering, yelling, singing, sport-maddened and en-

thusiastic throngs that would shortly occupy them, to cause them to sway as in a gale with the stress of their applause, to echo to the thunder of thousands of stamping feet.

But now the gridiron was deserted. It was like a battle-field whereon had taken place many a conflict, but which, like the arena of old, had been swept and garnished with sand, effacing the marks of strife, that those who came might not see them. It was all ready for the next battle of brawn, practice for which would soon take place.

Out from the gymnasium came rushing a crowd of lads—in canvas trousers and jackets, and in sweaters, the shoulders of which bulged with great leather patches. Some of the warriors had on leather helmets, and others swung rubber nose-guards from their arms by dangling strings.

"Line up! Line up!" came the cry.

"Come on for some punts!"

"Hey, Phil, send out some drop kicks!"

"Pass the ball!"

"Fall on it! Fall on it!"

The lads were racing about, leaping and jumping. Some were punting, others sending the ball swiftly around by a quick arm and hand motion. Still others, in the excess of their exuberance, were wrestling or tackling.

For it was the first day of practice with the

newly-organized team, and everyone was anxious to see what the result would be. Kerr had gone from Randall, after an affecting good-bye to his classmates, bearing with him their sincere wishes that his father would speedily recover, and that Ed would return.

Bricktop, for the first time since the season had opened, was without his football togs, and he felt it keenly. But once he had made up his mind, he decided to forget practice, though he consented to stay on about a week, and help Mr. Lighton coach Snail Looper in his work behind the line.

"Here you go, Tom!" called Sid, and he sent a puzzling spiral down the field. The plucky left end was down after it like a flash, extending his arms to gather it in. So swift was it, however, that it went right through his grasp, and bounded on the grass. Tom, like a flash, fell on it.

"Good!" cried the coach, who seemed to be watching every preliminary play, though regular practice had not yet been begun. "That's the way to do it."

There was some warm-up work, while Mr. Lighton and Dan Woodhouse consulted, and while the captain of the scrub was getting his men together. Then came the cry again:

"Line up! Line up!"

"We'll play a ten minute half," said the captain, and he glanced at a list in his hand. "Here's

how the 'varsity will line up," he added. "Tom Parsons will play at left end, Bert Bascombe at left tackle, Sam Looper at left guard, Holly Cross at centre. Billy Housenlager will be right guard. I'll play at right tackle, as usual. Joe Jackson will be at right end, and his brother can try it at full-back, only I wish he'd put on more weight. Phil, you'll go to quarter. Pete Backus will play right half-back, and Sid Henderson at left half. Now, I guess that completes the team. Get in line and see what we can do."

"And remember what I told you about fast, snappy playing," cautioned the coach. "I'm going to have the scrub do its best to make a touchdown on you, so watch out. Line up!"

The ball was placed in the centre of the field, and, as the 'varsity wanted to get into offense as soon as possible, the scrub was to kick off.

"All ready?" asked Ned Hendrix, who was captain of the scrub, as he looked across the field to see how his own players were bunched.

"All ready," answered Kindlings.

Ping! That was the nerve thrilling sound of the toe of Hendrix's shoe making a dent in the side of the ball. Straight and true it sailed, and into the arms of Jerry Jackson it fell.

"Now, fellows, come on! Make up some interference for him! Don't let them get through on us!" yelled the captain of the 'varsity, as the Jer-

sey twin tucked the ball under his arm, lowered his head and started back with the pigskin.

Before him ran his fellows, and speeding toward them came the eager scrub, thirsting for tackles. Jerry managed to run back twenty yards before he was downed, and as the two teams lined up for the first scrimmage, the coach shook his head rather dubiously.

"The scrub is a bit quicker than the 'varsity, I'm afraid," he whispered. "I've got to whip them into shape. Well, now to see how they tear through the line."

Phil Clinton was kneeling down behind Holly Cross to receive the ball. He gave a quick glance behind him, and decided to try out the mettle of Pete Backus.

"Seventeen—eighty-four—ready now—twenty-two—four—sixteen—eighty-three," counted Phil, but before he had called the last number he had given the signal for the ball to come back.

It was for Pete to take the pigskin in between tackle and guard, and, as he received the leather, Pete made a spring through the hole that was opened for him. He gained two yards, seeing which the coach murmured:

"He's got the strength, but he needs to be a bit quicker. Well, we've got time enough to get speed out of him, I guess."

The piled-up players slowly emerged from the heap, and Kindlings whispered to his new man:

"Good work, old fellow. That's the way to tear through them."

Phil was already calling off the next signal. He had found that quick, snappy work in beginning the signal, even though it was not quite yet time for the play, had the effect of somewhat demoralizing the other players, and also hastened the actions of his own men. Once more the ball went to the Grasshopper, but he failed to gain, and was thrown for a slight loss, for the scrub players were eager in breaking through.

"That won't do," objected the captain, gloomily.

"I—I didn't know he was going to give it to me so soon again," spoke Pete, pantingly.

"You must always be ready," was the comment.

Phil was calling for a kick now, on the last down, and Joe Jackson dropped back for it. The ball was sent out of danger, but coach and captain shook their heads. The 'varsity had not gained as much ground as they should have done.

"Better luck next time," said Kindlings hopefully.

"Your men need it," responded Mr. Lighton.

It was now the turn of the scrub to see what they could do, and they quickly formed over the pigskin, while their quarter-back called off the sig-

nals. At the sturdy line of the 'varsity, they plunged, trying to tear a hole between the left guard and tackle. They had quickly found the weakness of Pete, and Bert Bascome was not a tried warrior of the gridiron. The scrub penetrated for a couple of yards, and then, seeing what the danger was, the other players massed their strength there, and stopped the advance of the man with the ball.

Again the scrub hurled themselves against the line, trying on the other side this time. They could not gain, and Joe Jackson dropped back to receive the kick he expected would come.

But the scrub's quarter gave the signal for a fake punt, and when the 'varsity had spread out, the right half-back was sent forward with the ball. But they did not gain what they expected, for Kindlings, ever on the alert for a play like that, was watching, and, cleverly dodging through the interference, he downed the man with the ball in a fierce tackle. The scrub had gained their distance, however, and still had possession of the pigskin.

"Hold 'em this time!" begged the captain, as he got rid of some dirt that had been ground into his mouth under his nose-guard.

And hold the 'varsity did after that. Not an inch could the scrub gain, for the wall in front of them was like stone, and they were relentlessly

hurled back. Twice they tried it, and on the third down they kicked—no fake affair now.

The 'varsity had the ball again. Phil did not try Pete this time, but gave the leather to Sid, who, like an old time warrior, lowered his head and plunged into the line for three yards.

"Come on! Come on!" yelled Phil, pushing and pulling on his chum to help him through. There was a mass of crowding, struggling players all about Sid. The scrub, with desperate energy, tried to stem the progress of the human tide. Still Sid worked on, worming to get every inch, and he broke through the scrub line, staggered on and on, and when he was finally downed, with half a dozen of the players clinging to him like hounds to a stag, he had gained three yards, through a hard defense.

"Wow! Wow!" yelled Bean Perkins.

"That's what I ought to have done, I suppose," murmured Pete, regretfully, as he saw what a gain Sid had made.

"Oh, you'll do it yet," said Tom consolingly. "It takes a little practice. Those fellows are out for blood to-day. A lot of them are hoping to get on our team."

"Well, they won't!" declared Pete, and when he was given a chance with the ball a little later, he tore through for a two-yard gain in great fashion.

The 'varsity was now playing fiercely, and had the "measure" of the scrub. Those unfortunate lads tried in vain to stem the human torrent. The first team had the ball, and were not going to give it up. Down the line they rushed, shoving the second lads to one side—bowling them over.

"Touchdown! Touchdown!" came the cry when the five-yard line was reached. "Touchdown!"

And a touchdown it was, Sid being pushed and dragged over the line. It took eight minutes of play to make it, though, and the scrub felt in their hearts that they had done good work, as indeed they had.

There was another line-up, after a kick-off, and the scrub had another chance to show what they could do, but they failed to gain in two trials, and kicked. Then the 'varsity once more had the ball, and in the little while remaining to play, for the half had been lengthened to fifteen minutes, they rushed it up the field. A forward pass was tried, but did not work well, nor did an onside kick, and Mr. Lighton wisely decided to defer these plays until the team worked together better in straight football.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Kindlings, as he walked to the gymnasium with the coach.

"It might be worse," was the non-committal answer. "But they all mean well, and as soon as

Sam and Pete get more confidence, they'll do better. But—oh, well, what's the use of crossing a bridge until you get out of the woods, as Holly Cross would say. We have a game with Newkirk in two weeks, and if we can't beat them, even with the team we have——"

"We'd better go out of business," finished Dan.

"Exactly," agreed the coach, with a shrug of his shoulders.

CHAPTER VII

A NEW TIMEPIECE

"ANYTHING on for to-night fellows," asked Tom Parsons, as he limped along with Sid and Phil.

"No. Why?" inquired the quarter-back. "Are you going to see a girl? If you are, I heard Ruth say that she and Madge had a date at some Fairview affair, or something like that."

"No, I'm not going to see a girl," retorted Tom somewhat savagely, and a spasm of pain shot over his face. "I'll leave that for you and Sid this time. I'm going to lay off and bone."

"What's the matter?" asked Phil, anxiously. "Sick?"

"No, but I'm tired, and some one stepped on my ankle in that last mix-up."

"By Hannibal! I hope you don't go lame," put in Sid. "The team is crippled enough as it is."

"Oh, I'll be all right," asserted Tom. "All it needs is a rest and some liniment."

"I wrenched my knee a bit," spoke Phil, "but it doesn't bother me now."

"And I'd like to get hold of the fellow who rubbed my nose in the dirt," came wrathfully from Sid. "I must have chewed up about an ounce of it."

"It's good for your digestion," asserted Tom, with a wry face. "But say, fellows, doesn't it strike you as rather queer that we didn't get a hint about our missing chair and clock?"

"It is sort of so-so," admitted Phil.

"You'd have thought," went on Tom, as he stopped for a moment in the shadow of biology hall to favor his bruised ankle, "you'd have thought that if it was some of the boys putting up a job on us that they'd have given it away."

"Yes, such as asking what time it was, or if we rested well in our room, or something like that," added Sid. "But there wasn't even a look to give us a clew."

"Which means," declared the 'varsity left end, as he limped on, "that either none of our fellows have had a hand in it, or that they can keep a secret better than we fellows could. If this bunch had done anything like that we'd be wanting to rig the victim. But I can't understand this silence."

"It means something," declared Phil. "There's some mystery about this that's deeper than we have any idea of."

And there was a curious mystery which was destined to have quite an effect on Randall College.

"Well, let's forget all about it for a while," suggested Sid. "Maybe if we do, it will be like one of those problems in solid geometry, and the solution will come to us when we least expect it. Many a time I've stared at the figures and letters until they did the Blue Danube waltzes up and down the pages. Then I've just chucked it aside, taken up something else, and, all at once, it's as plain as——"

"The nose on Tom's face," interrupted Phil, for Tom was well blessed in that feature.

"Go ahead. Have all the fun you like," the pitcher invited, for his ankle was beginning to pain him more severely, and he did not feel equal to skylarking with his chums. "But as to forgetting about our chair, I can't do it. Queer, isn't it, how you'll get attached to an ordinary piece of furniture like that?"

"It wasn't an *ordinary* piece, you sacreligious vandal!" exploded Sid. "There isn't another chair like that in college. I have it on good authority that it was a family heirloom before we bought it of Hatterly, the big senior. It belonged in the Hess family, which was quite some pumpkins around here about the time of the wreck of the *Mayflower*."

"The *Mayflower* wasn't wrecked, you chump!" cried Tom.

"Well, what of it? Something happened to it, anyhow. It was stranded, or ran ashore, or else people landed from it. I never can keep those things straight in my head. At any rate, the chair is quite a relic, and I wish we had it back."

"I'm with you," declared Tom, feelingly. "I could just curl up in it in comfort to-night."

"Only you won't," retorted Phil.

"Nor yet listen to the clock tick," added Sid. "Now, let's talk of something else."

"Football," suggested Phil, quickly. "What do you fellows think about our chances, anyhow?"

"Not much," asserted the end. "Sam and Pete aren't doing as well as they used to do on the scrub."

"Stage fright, maybe," came from Sid.

"It's likely," admitted the quarter-back. "I remember when I first played on the 'varsity, I couldn't seem to see straight, I thought I was going to miss every tackle I tried for, and I was mortally afraid of dropping the ball. They'll get over it."

"I hope so," spoke Tom. "I wish Bascome wasn't playing on my end."

"Why?" asked Phil, quickly.

"Well, you know he rather stood in with Langridge and Gerhart when they were here, and, though he isn't as mean as they were, he isn't exactly in our crowd. I can't play with him the same way I can go into a game with the other fellows. I think I'll ask Kindlings to let me shift to the other end."

"Don't you do it!" cried Sid, quickly. "Look here, Tom Parsons, the surest way to have a team go to pieces is to have personal felings crop out among the players. We've got to play together, or——"

" 'Play separately,' as one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence said," interrupted Phil, with a laugh.

"No, I'm serious," protested Sid. "If we're going to act that way, Tom, we might as well give up the team now, and also all hopes of ever winning the championship this year. It's bad enough to have Bricktop and Ed off, without having you kicking up a fuss about Bascome."

"Who's kicking up a fuss, you old misogynist?" demanded the end, limping along. "I only said I couldn't play with Bascome as well as I could with Dan, and I'd like to shift."

"And if you do that it means that some one else will have to shift, and that will throw the whole team into confusion. No, you stick it out, Tom."

They walked on in silence for a few minutes, each busy with his own thoughts. The sun slanted across the campus, and glinted through the stained glass windows of Booker chapel, coloring the sward with a wonderful combination of violet and red. Back of the main college was a bank of purplish and olive tinted clouds, which Tom paused to gaze at in admiration.

"Look, fellows!" he exclaimed, softly. "It's just like one of those pictures of Venice, painted by what's his name."

"Yes, great artist," put in Phil. "Second cousin to 'who's this.' "

"No, but look at those colorings," protested Tom. "Did you ever see such cloud masses? The only thing about them is that they tell of fall coming on, and winter and leafless trees, and——"

"Oh, for cats' sake cut it out!" groaned Sid. "You must be in love again. Got a new girl?"

"Shut up!" ordered Tom, peremptorily, as he started toward their dormitory. "The next time I try to elevate the minds of you fellows by pointing out the beauties of nature you'll know it!"

"All right, old chap," came in soothing accents from Phil. "Those clouds *are* worth looking at, for a fact. Sid has no soul for anything above the commonplace."

"Neither would you have, if you'd been chewing on mud," declared the other. "It strikes me that we are getting silly, or sentimental, in our old age. Come on up and get into a bathrobe and we'll take it easy. I have some imported ginger ale, and some prime cheese in the closet."

"You rat! And you never spoke of it before!" cried Phil, clapping his chum on the back. "Come on, let's see who'll get there first, as the wolf said to Red Riding Hood," and he started up the stairs on the run, followed by Sid, while Tom limped on more slowly.

When the end reached their apartment he found the door open, and his two chums standing on the threshold as though afraid to enter. It was dark inside, for the shades were drawn. Tom looked at his two companions in some surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Snake in there? Why don't you go on in?"

"Listen!" exclaimed Phil, softly.

They stood expectantly. Through the stillness there came to them a rhythmetic tick-tick, which floated out of their room and into the corridor.

"The clock!" gasped Tom.

"Our clock!" whispered Phil, as though to speak aloud would break the magic spell.

"It's come back," went on Sid, taking a step

forward in a stealthy manner, as if he expected to surprise a burglar in the act. "Fellows, to all the gods that on Olympus dwell most everlasting praises be! Our clock's come back!"

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER IDEA

MAKING ready as though to greet an old friend who had long been absent, the three lads advanced to the middle of the room in the semi-darkness. Louder ticked the clock, and it was like music to their ears. Tom snapped on the electric lights, and the gaze of our three heroes went together toward the mantle shelf.

Then there came three simultaneous gasps of astonishment, a starting back in surprise, a catching of breaths.

"The clock!" spoke Tom, aghast.

"It isn't ours!" added Phil, gaspingly.

"They've brought back the wrong one!" exclaimed Sid.

Then, as they looked at the new timepiece, a smart one in a new and dull-polished mahogany case—an expensive clock—one they never would have thought of possessing, as they looked at it, there was a musical tinkle of a bell, and five strokes rang out as if in welcome.

"A new clock!" went on Phil, in accents of horror. "A clock that strikes!"

" 'Come plump, head-waiter of the cock, to which I most resort. How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock? Go fetch a pint of port!' " quoted Sid.

"Oh, what are we up against?" cried Tom. "The plot thickens! There is more of the direful mystery here! Talk about the Arabian Nights' tale of new lamps for old! Some one has taken our old clock and left in its place this new choice specimen of the art of the horologiographer."

"The art of whom?" asked Phil, in wonder.

"Clock-maker," translated Tom. "They say a fair exchange is no robbery, but this was an unfair exchange. We don't want a striking clock."

"No, give us back our own fussy little alarm," begged Sid. "I say, though, fellows, this is no slouch of a piece of horologiographic work, though. It must have cost eight or ten bones, and it's brand new. Do you guess some one's conscience smote 'em, after they'd made away with our ticker, and they wanted to make amends?"

"I don't know what to think," admitted Phil.

"Me either," came from Tom. "But if they bring back one of those new-fangled Turkish rockers in place of our old chair, I'll fire it out of the

window. We can stand the clock, though I'll be hanged if I like that striking arrangement."

"Me, either," agreed Sid. "But maybe we can get some clew from this clock. Let's have a look."

He turned the clock around on the shelf, thereby disturbing its mechanism and stopping the ticking, but he little minded that. He was looking for the maker's name.

"Say, was our door locked when you fellows got here?" asked Tom, who had been a little in the rear of his companions, due to his injured ankle.

"Sure it was locked," asserted Phil. "I opened it with my key. Whoever sneaked in here and left the new clock while we were at football practice must have had a duplicate key. How are you making out, Sid?"

"The clock, according to a card pasted on back, was made or sold by Amos Harding, of Chicago."

"Chicago!" cried Tom, in some excitement. "That's where Langridge came from! Is it possible that he could have come over from Boxer Hall, and played this joke?"

"It's possible, but not probable," declared Sid. "But we could write to Chicago, and see if Mr. Harding could give us any clew."

"Oh, what's the use?" asked Phil. "Chicago is a big place, and it's hardly likely that a dealer

there would remember to whom he sold a particular clock, when there are a whole lot like it. This clock is of fairly common pattern, though it's rather expensive. I'm inclined to think that we'll never get on to the game that way."

"What have you got to suggest?" asked Tom, as he prepared to bathe his ankle, while Sid set the clock going again.

"I was going to say that we might post a notice on the bulletin board, stating that we'd had enough of the joke, and would exchange clocks back again."

"Say, I've just thought of something!" exclaimed Sid. "Maybe there's a thief in college, and he's been going around snibbying things from the fellows' rooms. He's been found out, and made to put the things back. He got our clock mixed up with another, and the other chap has got our ticker."

"Not a bad idea," assented Phil. "In that case a notice on the bulletin board would be all right, and we'll wait about writing to Chicago. But Langridge is out of it, I think."

"Well, I don't," declared Tom, half savagely, for his ankle hurt him when he rubbed it vigorously "You'll find that he's been mixed up in this somehow. The clock is from Chicago, he comes from Chicago, and there's some connection there, you can depend on it!"

"Well, maybe," admitted Phil. "But let's get at the notice, and then it will be grub time. Might as well say something about our chair while we're at it; eh, fellows?"

"No," came from Tom, "let that go. I think the clock and chair were two different propositions. We'll work the chair ourselves."

After some talk his chums were inclined to agree with Tom, so Phil wrote out a notice about the timepiece, while Sid interestedly examined the clock, making various speculations concerning it, while Tom doctored his ankle.

"There, I guess that will do for a while," he announced, with a wry face, as he pulled on his shoe. "I hope I'm not lame for practice tomorrow."

"Well, here's the notice," exclaimed Phil, a little later. "I'll read it. 'For exchange: one mahogany-case clock, new; striking the hours and half hours——' "

"Hold on!" interrupted Sid. "*Does* it strike the half hours?"

"Sure, they all do," asserted Phil, and as if in confirmation of his words, there tinkled out a silvery stroke at five-thirty. "What'd I tell you?" he asked, in triumph. "Where was I?" as he looked at the piece of paper. "Oh, yes: 'strikes the hours and half-hours. The undersigned will give it back for their small nickle-plated alarm

clock, rather battered, but still in the ring. Doesn't strike at all.' How's that, fellows?"

"All right," said the end, as he laced his shoe loosely, for he had bandaged his ankle. "Let's have it, and I'll put my name down, then you fellows can go down and stick it up. I'm going to stretch out;" and, scribbling his name on the notice, Tom threw himself on the couch, with due regard for its age and weakness.

"I'll fix it up," volunteered Phil.

CHAPTER IX

A CLASH WITH LANGRIDGE

IN THE meanwhile football practice went on, and the team seemed to be getting into better shape, though there was much to be desired. Sam and Pete did better, though they were uncertain, and there was much ragged work, both in offensive and defensive plays, over which coach and captain shook their heads.

"Randall has got to do better than that," said Mr. Lighton, "if she wants to stay at the head of the league."

"Right!" agreed Kindlings. "Bricktop is coaching Sam all he can, but it needs more than coaching to make a guard."

"Hope for the best," suggested the coach. "I wonder how our freshmen will make out Saturday against Boxer Hall?"

"They'll win, of course," declared Dan, energetically.

The game between the two freshmen elevens of Boxer Hall and Randall was quite an event,

almost approaching the 'varsity struggles, and there was a big crowd on hand at the Boxer Hall gridiron the following Saturday when the contest was about to begin. Nearly all of the 'varsity squad was present to lend moral and vocal support, and Bean Perkins was in his element.

It was a hot battle from the very kick-off, and the two teams fought each other up and down the field. There was considerable kicking and open playing, but Randall depended on old-fashioned football, modified by Mr. Lighton, and secured the first touchdown. Boxer Hall got one before the initial half was finished, and then there was much speculation during the intermission as to which side would win.

By tremendous efforts, ploughing through the line, bucking great holes between their opponents, and by putting up a great defense, Randall succeeded in getting another touchdown, and a goal from the field, while Boxer Hall was unable to score in the last half. It was a glorious victory, all the more so because Randall had lost the contest the previous season.

The game was over. There had been cheers for the winners and losers, and college cries and songs galore.

"Come on over this way," urged Tom to Sid and Phil, who had sat with him during the game.

"I think I see Madge, Ruth and Mabel. There are a lot of Fairview girls here."

"Oh, trust you for seeing the lassies," half-grumbled Sid, yet he followed, for he had more than a passing liking for Miss Harrison.

As the trio approached the three girls, who were standing together on the side lines, Tom suddenly plucked his companions by their sleeves.

"What's up?" demanded Sid.

"There's Langridge and Gerhart going to speak to them," said the end.

"What?" cried Phil, and a red glow suffused the quarter-back's face as he saw the former bully of Randall speaking to his sister. "I'll not stand for that! I don't want Ruth to have anything to do with him!" For Langridge was not the kind of a chap any fellow would want his sister to associate with. In times past Langridge had been quite friendly with Miss Madge Tyler, but when she had discovered certain things about him, she had cut his acquaintance.

"Guess he's trying to get in with her again," suggested Sid.

"I'll put a stop to that!" exclaimed Phil, grimly, as he strode forward. Then he called peremptorily: "Ruth!"

His sister looked up, caught his eye, blushed a little and, with a word to Langridge and Gerhart, moved off. Her two girl friends followed, and

seemed glad of the chance to get away from the two sportily-dressed lads.

Langridge swung around, and at the sight of the three lads who, more than any others, had been instrumental in causing him to leave Randall, his face turned a dull red.

"What's wrong, Clinton?" he called, sharply. "Do you think your sister is too good to speak to me?"

"He evidently does," sneered Gerhart.

"Since you ask me—I do," replied Phil, calmly, and then he turned his back on the angry Boxer Hall students and began to talk to his sister and her friends, Tom and Sid joining in the conversation, not without a little sense of embarrassment.

"Look here, if you think I'm going to stand for being insulted publicly this way, you're mistaken, Clinton!" cried Langridge, hotly. He strode forward, while Gerhart tried in vain to hold him back.

"Oh, Phil!" cried Ruth, reaching out her hand to halt her brother, but in an instant he had gone beyond where she stood. She clasped her hands in alarm, and Madge and Mabel, with heightened color, gathered close to her.

Langridge and Phil faced each other with flashing eyes, and Gerhart stood just behind the former bully of Randall, looking a bit alarmed, for Lang-

ridge had torn from his grasp with considerable force.

"Look out, Phil," spoke Sid, in a low voice, but Langridge heard him.

"You keep out of this!" he snapped. "I'll settle with Clinton first, and then if you or Parsons want anything, you know where you can get it."

"Yes, and so do you!" declared Tom, stung by the bully's words. More than once had the plucky end proved his words, too.

"Oh, Tom!" breathed Madge, and she laid a gentle hand on his coat sleeve. "Don't—don't let them—fight!"

Tom slowly turned his gaze from the flushed and angry face of Langridge to that of the beautiful girl at his side. She was pale, but smiled bravely. It was a tense moment. Phil and the bully still stood facing each other, neither willing to give way. A little crowd, attracted by the impending clash, was approaching.

Tom caught Sid's eye, and the latter, with a quick motion, indicated that he and Tom must interfere to prevent an encounter, at least thus publicly.

"You—you insulted me," mumbled Langridge, his fists clenched, as he glared at Phil.

"Impossible," murmured Tom.

"I told you the truth, in answer to your ques-

tion," retorted the quarter-back. "You brought it on yourself."

"But why you should consider that my speaking to your sister was an insult, I can't quite make out," declared Langridge, with a sneer. "Neither she, Miss Tyler nor Miss Harrison resented it. But perhaps you consider yourself the knight errant of all girls. If so——"

"That will do!" interrupted Phil, sharply. "Leave my sister and her friends out of this discussion, if you please!"

"And if I don't please," sneered Langridge, "for I assure you that I do not, and——"

Phil fairly jumped for the bully and Ruth uttered a little cry. In another instant there would have been a scene which Phil, in his calmer moments would have regretted as greatly as any one.

CHAPTER X

THE BIG CALIFORNIAN

TOM saw what was about to happen, and his ready hand fell on his chum's shoulder.

"Not here! Not now!" he whispered into his ear. "Some other time, Phil. Think of your sisiter—of the other girls. A crowd is gathering. Not now! Not now!"

Phil made a motion as if to shake off the restraining grasp, and then thought better of it. In the meanwhile, Sid had casually stepped in front of Langridge. The left half-back motioned to Gerhart to call aside his chum, and the bully's crony was only too glad to do this, for he was somewhat of a coward, and he feared lest he, too, be entangled in the quarrel which seemed imminent.

"Go away, Langridge," advised Sid, in a low voice. "If you want satisfaction later I'm sure our friend will give it to you. But not now."

"Yes, come on," urged Gerhart, linking his arm in that of his friend. He swung him around,

and Langridge, with a vindictive look at Phil, allowed himself to be led away. At the same time Tom, with a forced laugh, for the benefit of the crowd, walked Phil to one side.

"Say something!" he whispered, hoarsely. "Laugh, Phil, if you don't want to make it unpleasant for the girls. The people are beginning to ask questions."

The quarter-back at once rallied to save the situation. He clapped Tom on the back, and exclaimed:

"That's pretty good, old fellow! Pretty good. You must tell that story at the next frat. dinner. But it was a great game, wasn't it? Now, come on, Ruth, and we'll all go and have something to drink. Hot chocolate wouldn't be bad."

"Most delightful," chimed in Miss Harrison, with a grateful look at Sid and Tom, as she gallantly threw herself into the breach.

"So good of you," murmured Ruth, smiling, though her paleness belied her meaningless words, and she was trembling.

The three lads, each walking beside one of the girls—Tom with Ruth, Phil with Madge Tyler, and Sid with Miss Harrison—strolled toward the entrance gate of the football field.

"Nobly done, old chap," whispered Tom.

The crowd began to melt away.

"I thought there was going to be a fight," mur-

mured one disappointed lad, whose "loud" clothes bespoke his sporting proclivities.

"There was," answered a companion, "only something stopped it."

"Who are those three fellows?" asked another lad from Boxer Hall—a freshman evidently.

"What—don't you know the three inseparables?" inquired the "sport." "Not to know them argues yourself unknown."

The girls were more at their ease now, and Phil, who had started what had so nearly been trouble, did not refer to it, to the great relief of his sister. Really, the interview with Langridge had been unsought on the part of the girls, and they had done their best to avoid speaking to him, without being downright insulting.

Miss Tyler and Miss Harrison began a series of gay nothings, and Ruth was soon drawn into the conversation, to which Tom, Phil and Sid contributed their share.

"Oh, tell us about the clock and chair mystery, boys," begged Ruth, when they had left the place where they had partaken of hot chocolate. "Phil said something about it, but I had to drag it out of him like a lawyer cross-questioning a reluctant witness."

"My! Listen to Portia!" cried Madge. "But we should dearly love to hear about the queer happenings."

Thereupon the three young men together and separately, told of the disappearance of their beloved chair, the missing clock, the appearance of the mahogany timepiece, and their ineffectual search for clews.

"And if Langridge didn't have a hand in it, I'll eat my hat, saving the presence of you ladies," declared Tom. "Only I can't get Sid or Phil to agree with me."

"What about, eating your hat?" demanded the quarter-back. "Don't let us interfere with that pleasure. Go ahead. If yours isn't enough, you may have a couple of bites out of mine."

"Oh, you know what I mean," declared Tom, in a little huff.

"If you mean about Langridge, I *don't* agree with you," put in Sid. "He never had his finger in this pie."

"Right, Oh!" exclaimed Phil, and then the discussion started all over again, and lasted until the girls declared that they must return to Fairview.

"Well, what do you think of it, fellows?" asked Tom, some time later, when the three chums were on their way back to their rooms. "Think Langridge will start anything?"

"No," was Sid's opinion. "I guess he'll be glad to let well enough alone."

"I suppose you think I didn't do exactly right

to make the break I did," ventured Phil, "but I couldn't stand it to see him talking to Ruth."

"Me, either!" declared Tom, so heartily that the other two laughed, and the little strained feeling that had manifested itself passed away.

As they strolled down the corridor the three lads nearly ran into a youth who turned the corner of the hall suddenly.

"I beg your pardon, strangers!" he exclaimed, in a full, rich voice. "I sure didn't see you coming, nor yet hear you. I guess I'm in the wrong pew."

Tom and his chums saw confronting them a tall, well-built lad—big would be the more proper term, for he was big in every way. Six feet if he was an inch, and broad in proportion. He stood regarding them without a trace of embarrassment, a stranger in a strange place, evidently.

For a moment Tom had a wild idea that the mystery of the chair and clock was about to be solved. He had not seen the youth before, and he might be a clever thief who had sneaked into the college.

"What did you want?" asked Phil, quickly.

"And who are you?" demanded Tom.

"I beg your pardon," went on the stranger. "I've just arrived at Randall, and Mr. Zane showed me to my room. I left it and went outside, but when I came in again, either someone took

my apartment, or, as I said, I'm on the wrong front stoop. Simpson is my name, Frank Simpson. I'm from California, and I've been attending Leland Stanford University, but father's business called him East permanently, and so I decided to come to Randall. I've just arrived," he concluded.

"Simpson," murmured Phil, wondering where he had heard the name before.

"With a capital 'S'," put in the strange student, with a whimsical smile.

"Oh, you're the fellow Jerry Jackson was speaking of," exclaimed Tom, recalling the Jersey twin's reference to some new students who were due to arrive at Randall.

"Much obliged to Mr. Jackson, whoever he may be," spoke the tall youth, "but I haven't the honor of his acquaintance."

"Oh, you'll soon know him," added Sid. "And so you're from California, eh?"

"Yes, but I think I'm going to like it here," was the response. "They tell me there was a Freshman football game to-day. Did our boys win?" he asked, eagerly. "You see, I'm making myself right at home, calling 'em *our* boys."

"That's the way to do," declared Tom, who, somehow, felt a sudden liking for the stranger. "Are you interested in football?"

"I played—some—at Stanford," was the mod-

est reply, "but I suppose it's too late to get on the team here. You're all made up, I hear."

"Made and unmade," murmured Tom, in a low voice. "Jove!" he added under his breath, as he took in the proportions of the big Californian, "what a guard or tackle he'd make!"

CHAPTER XI

A NEW COMPLICATION

"OH, HANG it all!" burst out Phil Clinton, as he tossed aside his trigonometry.

"What's the matter?" inquired Tom, looking up from his Latin prose.

"Have you got the dink-bots?" was Sid's gentle question, as he kept on carefully mounting a butterfly, one of the specimens he had captured during the summer, and had laid aside until a leisure moment to care for properly.

"I don't know what it is, but I can't get my mind down to study," went on the quarter-back.

"You never could," declared Tom, fortifying himself behind the sofa in case Phil should turn violent.

It was the evening after the Freshman game, and the three chums were in their study, after the meeting with the big Californian, as Frank Simpson had at once been dubbed. He had been directed to his room, which was on the floor above the apartment of our heroes, and he had gone off thanking them warmly.

"What's the main trouble?" asked Tom.

"Oh, nothing in particular; but I guess I'm thinking of too many other things. There's that little run-in I had with Langridge, seeing the game to-day, worrying about the clock and chair mystery, and wondering how our eleven is going to make out."

"It's enough to drive you to—cigarettes," admitted Tom. "But I——"

"Say, I'll tell you what let's do," broke in Sid. "Let's invite that Simpson chap down here. He must be sort of lonesome, being a stranger here. I saw him going off to his room after grub, and none of the fellows spoke to him. Now, Randall isn't that kind of a college. True, we don't know much about him, but he looks the right sort. It won't do any harm to have him down here and talk to him."

"Sure not," agreed Phil at once.

"Good idea," declared Tom. "Shall we all go and invite him down, as a committee of three, or will one be enough?"

"Oh, one," replied Phil. "You go, Tom, you're the homeliest. Have it as informal as possible."

"I like your nerve!" exclaimed the end. "However, I will go, for I like Simpson. I wish he was on the eleven. Wonder if he was any good at Stanford?"

"Never heard of him setting the goal posts on

fire," came from Sid, "but you never can tell. If he has any football stuff in him Lighton will bring it out. We can tell Simpson to get into practice, anyhow."

"Randall needs just such material as he looks to be," went on Tom, as he arose to go to the room of the Californian. "I rather hope he makes the 'varsity."

Frank Simpson very much appreciated the invitation he received, and a little later he was accorded a seat of honor on the sofa, and made to feel at home by our heroes, who plied him with questions about his native State, and what sort of a college Leland Stanford was. The newcomer at Randall answered genially, and, in turn, wanted to know many things. Particularly he was interested in football, and in response to Tom's urging that he practice, he said that he would.

"You fellows have quite a place here," went on Frank, as his gaze roved admiringly about the room. "Quite a tidy shack."

"You don't see the best part of it," spoke Sid.

"How's that?" inquired Frank.

"Our old easy chair was mysteriously taken, and in place of a clock whose tick, while an aggravation, made us all feel at home, that timer was left in its place," remarked Phil, before his chum

had a chance to answer. And then the story of the queer happenings was told again.

"Somebody's rigging you, I guess," was the opinion of the lad from Stanford. "I wouldn't let 'em see that I was worried."

"Oh, we're not, but we'd like to get our chair back," replied Tom.

"Something like that happened out in our college, when I was a freshman," went on the newcomer, who, it developed, was in the Randall sophomore class. "We fellows missed things from our rooms and made quite a row about it, thinking a thief was busy. But it developed that there was a secret society of seniors whose sworn duty it was to furnish up their meeting-room with something taken from every fellow's apartment in the college. Jove! But those fellows had a raft of stuff, every bit of it pilfered, and when we got next to it we stripped their meeting place as bare as a bone, and got our things back. Maybe that's what's happened here."

"It's possible," admitted Phil, "but we haven't heard of any senior secret society like that. It's worth looking up."

There was a knock on the door, and Holly Cross and Dutch Housenlager entered. They were introduced to Frank, and the congenial little party of lads talked of various matters, mostly football, until the striking of the new clock

warned them that it was time for the proctor to begin his nightly rounds of discovery.

Frank Simpson began football practice with the scrub eleven the next day, and though he was sneered at by some, Tom and his friends on the 'varsity at once saw that the Californian knew the game. Mr. Lighton did not have to have his attention called to the work of the newcomer, for he picked him out at once, and kept his eyes on him during the warm-up play.

"I shouldn't wonder but what there'd be 'varsity material there," the coach confided to the captain after the practice game was over, when the scrub had rolled up two touchdows against their mates.

"The land knows we need something to brace us up," replied Kindlings, somewhat despondently. "Sam Looper is getting worse instead of better. They tore big holes through him to-day."

"I know it," admitted Mr. Lighton. "And what will happen when Boxer Hall tackles us can be more than imagined, unless there's a big improvement. But I'm going to watch Simpson."

The big Californian was of a genial temperament, and he endeavored to make friends with his fellows on the scrub, but, somehow or other, they rather resented his advances, and turned the cold shoulder to him. Hurt, but not despairing, Frank "flocked by himself" for a few days. He

was becoming known as a "dig," for he did well in the classroom.

Then Tom, and his two mates, seeing how the wind was blowing, made a special point to invite the newcomer to their room more frequently. They took him to their bosoms, and their warm welcome more than made up for the coldness on the part of some of the others.

It was not an intentional slight by those who did not welcome Simpson. Don't get that impression, for there was a warm school spirit at Randall. Only, somehow, it took a little longer for a stranger to make friends, coming in after the term had started, than it did before. Then, too, the fact that he had not passed his freshman year there was a bit against him. But Tom, Phil and Sid minded this not in the least, and soon Frank was made to feel quite at home, for which he was duly grateful.

"It's mighty white of you fellows, to treat me this way, like a friend and a brother," he said, feelingly, one night, after a session in the room.

"Oh, get out! Why shouldn't we?" demanded Sid.

"Of course," spoke Tom.

"Well, lots of fellows wouldn't go to the trouble, and I appreciate it," went on the lad from the Golden Gate. "All I want now is to make the 'varsity, and I'll be happy!"

"You may be nearer getting on than you think," murmured Phil, for in practice that day Snail Looper had done worse than ever, while Frank was a tower of strength to the scrub, which had almost beaten the first team.

In spite of their work on the gridiron, our heroes did not forget to look for clews to the missing chair and clock. Only none developed, search and pry about as they did. The big Californian helped them by suggestions, but there proved to be nothing in his theory of a purloining secret society, and Tom and his chums did not know which way to turn next.

The date for the game with Newkirk was drawing closer, and practice was correspondingly harder. It was one afternoon, following a gruelling hour on the field, that as Tom, his two chums, and Frank were walking toward the gymnasium, they saw several members of the faculty entering the house of President Churchill.

"Hello! What's up?" exclaimed Tom.

"Something, evidently," answered Phil.

"Have any of you fellows been cutting up?" asked Sid, with suspicious looks at his companions. They quickly entered denials.

Clearly there was something extraordinary in the meeting that had evidently been called, for the professors wore grave looks as they entered the residence of the head.

"I hope none of the 'varsity crowd has been misbehaving himself, and will get laid off the team," went on Phil, who felt that he carried the weight of the eleven on his shoulders. "We're in bad enough shape now."

"Here comes Wallops, let's ask him," suggested Tom, and when the messenger approached they plied him with questions.

"I don't rightly know what it is," answered Wallops, "but it is something important and serious, so I heard Mr. Zane saying to Professor Tines, when he gave him word about the meeting. It has something to do with the title to the land on which the college is built. I believe some one has laid claim to it, on account of a cloud on the title, but I really don't understand legal terms."

"Do you mean that Randall College is in danger of losing some of the property?" gasped Phil, as he looked around at the fine campus, the athletic field, and the group of buildings.

"It's something like that," went on the messenger. "I heard Mr. Zane say the land might be taken by the heirs of some old man who once had a claim on it."

"Well, what would happen if he could make good his claim?" asked Sid.

"I don't know, but I suppose the heirs could say the college was theirs, being built on their ground, or they could tear it down. But I don't

rightly know," concluded Wallops. "Probably it will be known after the meeting."

"More trouble for old Randall!" groaned Tom, as he and his chums watched the gathering of the solemn professors.

CHAPTER XII

THE MISSING DEED

BAD news, they say, travels fast, and certainly it must have made a record trip throughout the length and breadth of Randall that afternoon.

Tom and the others had scarcely changed from their football togs into ordinary clothes before half a score of their fellows demanded to know if they had heard the rumors that were flying around.

"We sure have," replied Tom. "How much truth is there in them, Jerry Jackson?"

"I don't know," replied the Jersey twin.

"We only heard as much as you did," echoed his brother.

"Prexy will make an announcement at chapel to-morrow morning, if there's anything in it," declared Dutch Housenlager.

"Then I wish it was chapel time now," murmured Phil. "I don't like this suspense."

"Me either," declared Sid.

"Well, there's one consolation," put in Frank

Simpson. "If it's got anything to do with the law there's no present danger that the college will be torn down—not before the football season is over, anyhow."

"Why not?" demanded Tom.

"Because the law is so slow. If it's a question of title to land it can go through several courts before it's definitely decided. I know because my father's a lawyer, and he's had several cases of disputed titles."

"Well, there's something in that," declared Phil. "But I don't like to think of old Randall being in any kind of danger. It makes me uneasy."

The talk became general, and there were many speculations as to what the trouble really was, and what the outcome would be. The conversation continued after our friends had gone to their room, whither flocked a number of their chums to discuss the situation. For the time being football was forgotten, and the trouble of Randall held the centre of the stage.

"Well, there's no use worrying about a bridge, until you hear the rustle of its wings," said Sid at length.

"What we fellows need to do is to get out and make a noise like having some fun," opined Dutch Housenlager. "When the cat's gone on her vacation, the mice eat bread and cheese, you know. Proc. Zane is closeted with the bunch of high-

brows, and so what's the matter with cutting up some?"

"Dutch, I'm surprised at you!" exclaimed Tom, reproachfully.

"Why? What's the matter?" asked the fun-loving youth, innocently.

"Wanting to skylark at a time like this, just because the authorities are in *statuo quo,*" went on Tom. "Not on your life, Dutch! It's fun enough to play some tricks when you're taking chances on getting caught. Now it would be like taking pie from a baby in arms."

"I guess you're right," admitted Dutch Housenlager, contritely. "We'll defer the operation," he went on, in solemn tones. "I think the patient will survive until morning."

Seldom had there been such an attendance at service as greeted Dr. Churchill when he stood on the platform in the Booker Memorial Chapel the next morning. The early sun glinted in through the stained glass windows, and seemed to pervade the room with a mystic light that added to the solemnity of the occasion.

The Scriptural selection was from one of the Psalms of David—one of those beautiful prose poems which are such a comfort in times of trouble. And as the vibratant tones of the venerable president's voice rose and fell, when he feelingly spoke the words, it seemed to the boys, care-

less and happy-go-lucky as they might be ordinarily, that a new dignity and depth of appreciation was theirs.

After the prayer, which was in keeping with the Bible reading, Dr. Churchill arose, and came slowly to the edge of the platform. He stood for a moment, silently contemplating the throng of earnest young faces raised to his, and then he spoke.

"Men of Randall," he began, solemnly, "we are facing a crisis in the history of our college. Men of Randall, it behooves us to meet it bravely, and with our faces to the enemy. Men of Randall, we may be at the parting of the ways, and so, being men together, I speak to you as men."

The good doctor paused, and a sound, as of a great sigh, passed through the assemblage. Usually when the doctor had any announcement to make, he addressed the students as "young gentlemen." They felt the change in the appellation more than any amount of talk would have impressed them.

"Doubtless you have heard rumors of the crisis in our affairs," went on the president, after taking off his glasses, slowly wiping them, and replacing the frames back of his ears, over which the white locks fell. "Whatever you have heard I beg of you to disregard to this extent, that you do not repeat it. In evil times words increase trouble. I

will tell you the truth as nearly as I and the gentlemen associated with me can come at it.

"Randall College, as you know, was built many years ago. The land was purchased from a fund left by a gentleman who had the good of the youth of this land at heart. Other endowments enabled buildings to be put up. In all these years no hint of trouble has come to us, but now we are confronting a fact, not a theory, as your political science teaches you.

"The land whereon Randall and the various buildings stand, yes, where there is laid out the fields for the pursuit of baseball and football, and I think I am right in assuming this to be the football season?"

The president paused, and glanced questioningly at the proctor, whom he evidently took for an authority on sports. For Dr. Churchill, while an enthusiastic supporter of every team in the college, knew rather less about the various terms, and times of games than the average baby. The proctor nodded in acquiescence.

"Even the very football field is under suspicion," continued the president, and there was another great sigh, mainly from that section of the chapel where sat Tom and his chums. "In fact the entire ground on which the college is built has been claimed by outsiders.

"The facts, in brief, are these: When the land

was purchased there were several persons who had interests therein. From them releases, in the form of quit-claim deeds, were obtained, and then it was thought that the corporation of Randall had a clear title. Now it develops that a certain Simon Hess was one of the persons who gave a quit-claim deed, after being paid for his share in the land.

"That deed, I regret to say, can not be found, and in the absence of it, it is as if it never existed. Simon Hess is dead, but he left several heirs, and they are now making a claim against the college. Perhaps they might not be so eager, were it not for certain lawyers who are apparently urging them on.

"An attempt was made to settle with them when they made their claim known, but the lawyers insisted that their clients prosecute their suits, and so the hope of compromise was abandoned. It seems that they want the life's blood of our college, and, as you know, we are not a wealthy institution.

"Yesterday I received from Mr. Franklin Langridge, the lawyer who represents the claimants, a demand for a large cash settlement if their claim was abandoned. I need hardly say that Randall is in no position to pay a large amount in cash. I called a meeting of the faculty, and we came to

that conclusion. I have so notified Mr. Langridge."

At the first mention of that name there had been an uneasy movement among the students. At its repetition, when it was whispered around that this was the father of Fred Langridge, the former bully of the college, the movement became more pronounced.

"Mr. Langridge," went on the president, when he was suddenly interrupted by a series of hisses. Dr. Churchill started. Mr. Zane hurriedly whispered to him, explaining that it was only the name of Langridge that thus met with disapprobation. The venerable president raised his hand for silence.

"Men of Randall," he said, solemnly, "that was unworthy of you."

The hissing stopped instantly.

"And so our college is in danger," continued the good doctor, after a pause, "but we must face it bravely. We will not give way to it. We will meet it like men! We will fight the good fight. We will——"

"Three cheers for Randall College and Dr. Churchill!" yelled Bean Perkins, leaping to his feet and forgetting that he was in chapel—forgetting that it was a solemn occasion—forgetting everything save that he was wrought up to the

point of frenzy. "Three cheers, and the biggest tiger that ever wore stripes, fellows!"

Oh, what a shout there was! Every student was on his feet in an instant, yelling at the top of his voice. Even some of the faculty joined in, and Dr. Emerson Tines was observed to be wildly waving his hands. How the cheers rang out! And then the tiger!

Dr. Churchill blew his nose violently, and wiped his glasses several times, for there was a mist of tears on them. He tried to speak—to go on—but he was too affected.

Slowly he turned, and walked back to his seat amid the faculty. And then Bean Perkins did what forever covered him with glory, wherever, in after years, the stories of Randall College were told.

Jumping up on one of the pews, he raised his hand for silence. Then, in a voice that was singularly sweet and clear, he started that school song: *"Aut Vincere, Aut Mori!"*

Welled out the strains from hundreds of throats—the song of songs—the song that was always sung in times of victory, or when the teams on diamond or gridiron seemed to be putting up a losing fight—the song that had snatched many a victory from defeat.

Forth it rolled, deep-voiced and solemn, sung in the original Latin, in which it had been com-

posed years ago by a gifted graduate: "*Aut Vincere, Aut Mori!*" — "Either We Conquer, or We Die!"

It was the rallying cry to the battle that confronted the college.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIRST GAME

SILENCE followed what was probably the most remarkable scene that had ever taken place at chapel in the history of Randall. A deep, heart-felt silence, which was almost as impressive as the unexpected singing had been. Some of the students were fairly panting from the emotion which had racked them, for they had been stirred as they seldom were before.

Slowly Dr. Churchill arose from the chair, and again approached the edge of the platform. His voice broke as he spoke a few words.

"Men of Randall, I thank you," he said impressively and simply. "You may rest assured that nothing will be left undone to save the old college, which has no more loyal supporters than yourselves, and, I may add, than the gentlemen associated with me on the faculty."

He paused a moment, as if he would say more, and then, with a motion of his hand, dismissed the assemblage. In silence the students filed out, and it was not until they were some distance away from

the chapel, broken up into little groups, that they began discussing the situation. Even then it was in hushed voices, as if the enemies of Randall might be hiding about, listening for something of which they could take advantage.

"Wallops wasn't far out," remarked Tom, who, with Phil, Sid and some other friends, was walking slowly along.

"No," came from the quarter-back, "but wouldn't it get your Angora, though? To think of there being a flaw in the title all these years, and someone only just now taking advantage of it!"

"I wonder what can have become of the missing quit-claim deed?" ventured Sid.

"No telling," remarked Holly Cross.

"Prexy said it was given by a Simon Hess," went on Tom. "I've heard that name before, somewhere, but I can't recall it."

"I was telling you about our chair having been in the Hess family," explained Sid. "Don't you remember, I said it was one of the Hess heirlooms when we bought it of Hatterly, the Senior."

"That's right," agreed Tom. "Fancy that now! Maybe next they'll be accusing us of having the missing deed, because we have some of the Hess property."

"We *haven't* got it, you mean," put in Phil. "Our chair is still in a state of *non est*."

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"Haven't you located that venerable piece of achitecture yet?" asked Dutch Houselager, with a sly putting forth of his foot, in an effort to trip Tom. Dutch was always up to some horse-play.

"No, we haven't found it, and I guess we're not likely to," went on the end, as he spoiled the efforts of Dutch by hitting him a playful blow in the side. "The mystery of the clock is still unexplained. Our offer to trade back hasn't had any takers."

"Oh, you fellows make me tired, always talking about your old relics!" broke in Kindlings. "You had much better be considering some new football plays, or how to help Randall out of the hole she's in."

"Out of the hole some rascally lawyers *got* her in, you'd better say," corrected Holly Cross. "This trouble never would have developed, if it hadn't been that some legal sharps stirred it up, for the hope of a fat fee, I presume."

"And Langridge's father, of all lawyers!" put in Sid. "You'd have thought that since his son once went here, he'd have had the decency not to appear in the case, and would have left it for some one else."

"Maybe he's doing it on purpose, just because his son had to leave here," suggested Tom.

"Shouldn't wonder a bit," agreed Captain Woodhouse. "But, say, don't let this trouble get

on your minds, fellows, so that you can't play football. We're going up against Newkirk day after to-morrow, you know, and while we'll probably roll up a big score against 'em, we can't take any chances. Hard practice this afternoon. We want to wipe up the field with the scrub."

"We'll be on hand, captain!" promised Phil, and the other players shouted their assents. The students went to their various studies, still talking over the scene of the morning, and what it portended.

It was learned, later in the day, that the best legal talent possible had been engaged to fight the claim of the Hess heirs for the Randall land, and that a vigorous search would be made for the missing quit-claim deed, without which the college could not prove a clear title to the property.

It also was hinted that Mr. Langridge was not altogether actuated by purely legal motives in prosecuting the claim against the college. When it became known that the father of Garvey Gerhart was associated with him in the law business, there were few students who did not believe that the two men were acting as much out of revenge because their sons had been forced from Randall, as from any other motive.

"But it will take some time to get the land away from the college trustees, even if they lose

the case," explained Frank Simpson, "so there won't be any football games cancelled."

He was in his uniform, and was walking out on the field with Tom and the others to the practice.

"I only wish he was going to be in the game with us against Newkirk instead of the Snail," mused Tom, as the scrub and 'varsity lined up. "We'd stand a better chance to pile up a big score."

But Sam Looper seemed to do better that afternoon, and was complimented by the coach for some good tackles he made, as well as for his ability in breaking through the scrub line.

"Oh, maybe he won't be so bad," conceded the captain, hopefully.

The practice was hard and gruelling, but it brought out a number of weak spots, which were impressed upon the players, that they might avoid them. Also some faults in plays were discovered, and measures taken to correct them.

There was more hard practice the following day, when the scrub, mainly through the fine playing of the new member, Frank Simpson, came perilously near scoring, which they had been prevented from doing of late. The big Californian was showing up wonderfully well, and he was making more friends by his sterling character.

At last came the time for the first regular 'vars-

ity game of the season, and though Newkirk was considered a sort of second-rate rival, there had been a marked improvement in her playing of late, so that the Randallites understood they were to have no walkover.

The grandstands were filled with a motley crowd of students, men and women spectators and pretty girls galore, for nearly all the feminine contingent of Fairview Institute was on hand, shrilly cheering, or singing for their favorite team, and waving the colors of their own college, intermingled with those of Randall or Newkirk. It is no exaggeration to say that the yellow and maroon of Randall predominated, and when Tom, Phil and Sid looked toward a certain section of grandstand A, which location had previously been brought to their attention, they saw three particularly pretty girls, waving the colors that meant so much to them.

"Madge, Ruth and Mabel are there," announced Tom, as he followed his mates into the dressing room.

"Glad of it," remarked Phil. "It sort of makes you feel as if you could play better when——"

"Your sister is looking on—or some one's else sister, eh?" broke in Sid.

"Oh, dry up!" exclaimed Phil, as he looked to the shoulder pads on his canvas jacket.

Out on the gridiron trotted the Newkirk play-

ers, to be received with a salvo of cheers from the contingent of supporters who had accompanied them to the Randall grounds.

Then the home team followed, and Bean Perkins leaped to his feet, wildly brandishing a cane with the college colors streaming from it, while he led the cheering, and then added his powerful voice, as the students broke into the song: "We're Going to Wallop 'Em Now!"

It was announced that the game would be played in two halves, and when Captain Woodhouse had conferred with Billy Bardeen, who ran the Newkirk team, they tossed for choice. Dan won, and elected to defend the north goal, which gave him and his men the advantage of a little wind. Newkirk was to kick off, and when Bardeen had teed the ball on a little mound of dirt in the centre of the field, he gave a glance to see if his men were ready. He gave the signal to the referee, and that official, after a confirmatory nod from Captain Woodhouse, blew his whistle.

With a little run, Bardeen planted his toe in the pigskin, which, straight and true, sailed to Randall's ten-yard line, being caught by Sid Henderson, who rushed it back fifteen yards before he was downed by a fierce tackle by Ed Denton. There was wild cheering by Perkins and his mates at this, for it seemed to indicate that Newkirk was not as strong as she had been rated.

Sid slowly arose and planted his foot on the ball until Holly Cross came up.

"Line up!" yelled Phil, stooping down behind the big centre, and then he began calling the signal: "Fourteen—eighty-seven—one hundred and six—forty-two——"

He snapped his hands, and the ball came back to him. Like a flash it was passed to Joe Jackson, who hit the line for all he was worth, and tore through for two yards, the Newkirk players seeming to crumple to pieces under the smashing attack. There were more cheers at this, and when Sid Henderson tore off three yards more around left end, the Randall crowd went wild.

"Walk it up for a touchdown!" yelled Bean Perkins.

It did look as though the ball might be steadily advanced up the field for the coveted point, especially when Pete Backus managed to wiggle through between left guard and tackle for three yards more.

But then Newkirk took a brace, and held against the rushing tactics of her rival, so that, after getting the ball to within ten yards of the goal line, Randall tried for a field goal, and lost because the pigskin struck the post.

Once more Randall, after some scrimmages during one of which Tom got the ball, began the rushing tactics, and this time with such fierceness

and energy that inside of five minutes his mates had shoved Sid Henderson over the line for the first touchdown. Holly Cross kicked the goal, and there was a wild riot of cheers.

"That's the way to do it; eh, Kindlings?" cried Tom, capering about in delight.

"We'd ought to have done it twice over in this time," was the somewhat unsatisfactory response. "If we don't look out, they'll score on us."

But there was no danger of that in the first half, when Randall got another touchdown and goal, and ended up with a field goal. Then indeed did Bean Perkins and his cohorts let loose, singing wildly, though they did not give the "Conquer or Die" song. There seemed to be no need for it.

Newkirk was downcast, but would not give up. When the second half was resumed, with some new players lining up against Randall, there was a moment when it seemed as if her rivals might menace her goal line, for they rushed the ball up with disheartening speed. The gains were mostly made through the unfortunate Sam Looper, who could not seem to hold, and Bert Bascome, his tackle, was not playing at his best.

"Put in Simpson," sugested Tom to Kindlings, during the time taken out to enable the Newkirk players to try to get some wind back into their plucky quarter-back.

"I don't like to put him in over the heads of men who have been on the scrub all season," objected the captain.

"It will be worth while," insisted Tom.

"Well, we'll see," promised Dan, and then play was resumed. Once more there was a gain through Sam, and partly because of a fear that his team would be scored upon, and partly in exasperation, Dan signalled for Frank to jump in.

There was a joyful look on the face of the big Californian as he took his place in the line, and the Snail rather ruefully retired.

"I guess I need more practice, or—something," he admitted.

"Principally 'something,'" agreed one or two of the scrub players.

Randall did not exactly need new life, for she practically had the fight won, but the advent of Simpson was good. He was a powerful player, knew the game and its tactics to perfection, and tore open great holes in the other line, through which the Randall backs plunged for substantial gains.

It looked to be easy sailing from now on, and when several more points had been scored for Randall, Captain Woodhouse gave orders for easier playing, as he wanted to save his men. It nearly cost them something, however, for Joe Jackson made a fumble, and the ball went to New-

kirk. Then, wild to score, those players tore things loose, and shoved back the Randallites until it looked as if their goal line would be crossed.

There were many anxious hearts when the ball was on the twenty-yard mark, and when a trial for a field goal was made by Newkirk, there were prayers that it would fail. It did, and then the leather was quickly booted far enough away to preclude the possibility of further danger. Before Newkirk could rush it back five yards, the final whistle blew, and the first game of the season was over, with a score of thirty-two to nothing, in favor of Randall.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HAZING OF SIMPSON

"THREE cheers for the Newkirks!" commanded Bean Perkins, as he swung his gaily decorated cane, and the yells bore ardent testimony to the warm feeling felt for a defeated rival.

"Now, then, sing: 'Though We Walloped You, We Love You'!" again ordered the cheer leader, and the song welled forth.

In turn, the Newkirk players cheered for their opponents, and though there was the bitterness of defeat in their hearts, none of this betrayed itself in their yells.

The big crowd scattered from the grandstands, and, pausing only to get rid of the worst of the dirt that marked them, our three heroes were soon walking side by side with Phil's sister and her two companions.

"Oh, wasn't it great?" demanded Miss Tyler, of Phil.

"Splendid!" cried Ruth Clinton.

"You certainly rolled up a great score against

them," was Miss Harrison's contribution to the trio of opinions.

"We ought to be ashamed of ourselves," declared Phil. "Newkirk isn't in our class, and we only play them to sort of open the season, and for practice. Yet they nearly scored on us."

"Oh, we didn't do so bad," was Tom's opinion.

"I think we showed up pretty well, for a team that had to be patched up after we lost two of our best players," came from Sid.

"Well, you fellows didn't play so awful," conceded the quarter-back, "but if Sam had been in much longer there'd have been a different story. Pete Backus is making out all right, and his practice in jumping does him good. But Sam——"

"Simpson helped a lot," said the end.

"Yes, better than I thought he would. He didn't get gridiron-fright because he was on the 'varsity, and his head seems to be about the same size as before, barring where he got kicked over the eye," went on Phil. "Understand, I'm not knocking the team!" he explained quickly, for he saw the girls looking at him rather oddly. "Only I know, and so does Kindlings and Lighton, that we've got to do heaps better when we play Fairview and Boxer Hall."

"Oh, our boys are going to beat you!" exclaimed Miss Tyler, with a mischievous glance at her chums.

"Yes, you have to stick up for Fairview," declared Phil, "but wait and see." He spoke confidently, yet there was an uneasy feeling in his heart. Both Boxer and Fairview had stronger teams than ever before.

The little party walked on, laughing and chatting, discussing the game at intervals. Phil had a chance to speak to his sister away from the others for a moment, and took advantage of the opportunity, to ask:

"Langridge hasn't been pestering you with any of his attentions lately, has he, Ruth?"

"Indeed he hasn't!" she exclaimed vigorously. "And if he does, Phil, I hope you won't do as you did before, and make the other girls and me ridiculous."

"I didn't mean to do that," replied the quarterback, "only I'm not going to have him mixing in with anyone I care for."

"And I presume that is intended as much for Madge as it is for me!" whispered Ruth, with a laugh at her brother's blushes, which were visible under the bronze of his tan.

"Oh, don't——" he began, and then the others came up.

"Well, what about us, fellows?" asked Tom, when the inseparables were in their room that night, rather sore and tired from the game.

"We can't pat ourselves on the back, and vote

ourselves gold medals," declared Phil. "I hear that Lighton and old Kindlings are having a consultation, and there may be a shift of some of the players."

"I hope he puts me on the other end," exploded Tom. "Bascome didn't support me at all to-day."

"Now, don't get to feeling that way over it!" cautioned Phil, quickly. "That spirit makes a team go to pieces sooner than anything else."

"Oh, I'm not going to disrupt the team!" declared Tom. "I think, though——"

He stopped suddenly, and appeared to be listening. Phil sat up on the old sofa, and Sid looked questioningly toward the door.

"Someone's out in the corridor," he whispered.

"Yes," and Tom nodded. "Maybe they think we're out, and they're bringing back our chair."

"Or the clock," added Phil.

Tom arose, and tiptoed toward the portal. Before he reached it, there came a cautious knock on the panel.

"Shall we answer it, or pretend we're not in?" he breathed to Sid. Then, without giving the latter time to answer, a voice called, in a hoarse whisper:

"I say, Tom, are you and the bunch in there?"

"It's Dutch!" spoke Phil, in his natural tone. "Come on in, you old scout! What's all the secret society business about, anyhow?"

Tom opened the door, and Billy Housenlager and Holly Cross stood revealed.

"Don't yell so!" cautioned Dutch. "We're going to haze that big chap—what's his name?" and he turned to Holly.

"The one from California," explained the centre rush.

"Oh, Simpson," supplied Tom. "Haze him—what for? The hazing season is over."

"Not for him," explained Dutch, with a chuckle. "You see, he arrived late, and he didn't get what was coming to him in his freshman year. So he has to take it now. Do you lads want to be in on it? If you do, don't make any noise. He's in a room nearly above you fellows, and he may suspect something and listen. Want to have some fun?"

"I don't know—do we?" and Tom turned to his companions.

They hesitated a moment, and then Phil, with a long yawn, exclaimed:

"I don't know as I care to. Too tired. You fellows can, if you like."

"Not for mine!" came quickly from Sid. "I've got some butterfly specimens to mount."

"Oh, you fellows make me tired!" declared Dutch, in accents of disgust. "Why don't you be sports? Have some fun! Come on, Tom!"

"No; if Phil and Sid are going to stay in to-

night, I'll be with them. You and Holly can go ahead with the hazing. What's it going to be?"

"Oh, it isn't Holly and me alone," explained Dutch, quickly. "A lot of the lads are in on it, but I suggested you chaps, and now you back out."

"We never backed in," replied Phil. "What are you going to do to Simpson, anyhow?"

"Make him swim Sunny River," declared Dutch, with a chuckle. "That is, we're going to chuck him in, and he'll sink or swim."

"That's taking chances," remarked Tom, quickly. Somehow, he did not like the idea of hazing the Californian. They had become too friendly with him, and Tom was glad his chums had declined to have a hand in it.

"No chances at all," denied Dutch, vigorously. "We'll be ready with a boat and ropes, in case he can't swim. But I think he can."

"I didn't mean about that part of it," went on the end. "But he may take cold."

"Oh, piffle!" cried Holly Cross. "If he can't stand a little wetting he's no good. Besides, it's warm to-night. Come on, Dutch; we'll go back and tell the crowd that this bunch is doing its knitting, and can't come." His voice showed his contempt.

"Tell 'em anything you like," retorted Sid, "and maybe before you're through you'll wish you'd stayed home and learned your lessons."

"Aw, rats!" fired back Dutch, as he and his chum went down the corridor.

"Say, maybe there's more truth than poetry in what you said," commented Phil, after the door had been closed.

"In what?" asked Sid.

"About those fellows being sorry. You know, Simpson is a husky lad, and he may put up more of a fight than they give him credit for."

"By Jove!" cried Tom, suddenly. "I believe you're right, Phil. Those hazers are going to stack up against trouble, and what's the matter with us seing the fun?"

"How?" asked Sid.

"Go down to the river, and watch 'em throw Frank in."

"Sure!" cried Phil; and a little later three figures stole cautiously out, crossed the campus, and took position well concealed in the now leafless shrubbery that lined the bank of the stream.

"Here they come!" suddenly exclaimed Tom, who had constituted himself a lookout. "And they've got him, too!"

"How can you tell?" demanded Phil.

"He's the biggest fellow in the bunch."

"I didn't think he'd let them take him out of his room," said Sid. "Maybe he's in a blue funk."

"You don't know him," declared Tom, quietly. "If I'm not mistaken. there'll be some fun soon."

"Keep quiet, or they'll have the laugh on us if they see us," cautioned Phil.

The hazers and their victim came nearer, and the voice of Dutch Housenlager could be heard declaiming in triumph:

"Now, then, fellows, we'll initiate Mr. Simpson into the mysteries of the Mermaid Society. I believe you never were a member of that, were you, Mr. Simpson?" he asked, mockingly.

"Never, and I don't want to join now," came from the big Californian, who seemed strangely gentle in the hands of his captors.

"Oh, but you must, you know," explained Holly Cross.

"Sure," asserted Bascome. "You ought to have joined as a Freshman, but it's not too late. Is the water nice and warm, Dutch?"

"Yes; I had it heated to seventy-two degrees this afternoon," replied the fun-loving Housenlager.

"What! You're not going to put me in the river to-night, are you?" demanded Simpson, in almost tragic tones.

"That's our intention," mocked Dutch.

"But I may catch cold. You oughn't to do a thing like this, boys," pleaded Frank.

"Oh, listen to him!" mocked Bascome. "Let's take him back to his mama!" and he imitated the crying of a baby.

"SIMPSON ISN'T IN THE WATER AT ALL, FELLOWS! HE'S THROWING THE OTHERS IN."

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"Oh, but, fellows, just consider," begged the intended victim. "I—I may be drowned," and his teeth seemed to chatter. "Please—please let me go!"

"Oh, yes—with bells on!" cried Holly, with a laugh.

"Say, I thought you said he'd make mincemeat of 'em?" whispered Phil. "Why, he's a coward!"

"Maybe," admitted Tom, somewhat puzzled. "I didn't think he'd beg off like this."

"Pshaw! It's going to be a fizzle," declared Sid.

"Now, then, all ready?" asked Dutch of his chums. "Get good holds, Holly and Bascome, and pitch him in."

"Oh, let me go! Please let me go!" begged Simpson.

"Aw, cut it out! Be a sport!" urged Dutch. "It won't hurt you, and if you can't swim, we'll pull you out. You've got to take your medicine, and you might as well make up your mind to it. In with him now, fellows!"

"Let her go!" cried Holly.

"No! Don't! Stop!" cried the Californian, and his voice broke. "Please let me go—consider, fellows—you may regret this!"

"Regret nothing!" cried Dutch. "In with him!"

There was a struggle on the bank of the river,

a series of surprised grunts and exclamations. Then a dark body went sailing through the air, and fell with a splash into the stream, while the shout that followed ended in a gurgle.

"There he goes!" cried Phil. "He's in!"

Another dark body shot from the bank into the water.

"Why—why!" gasped Sid. "They're hazing two! Who's the other lad, I wonder?"

The second body made a great splash. Then, before it came to the surface, a third form hurtled through the air and made a great noise in Sunny River.

"Julius Cæsar's grandmother's cat's kittens!" yelled Tom, careless of who heard him. "Simpson isn't in the water at all, fellows! Look! look! There he is! He's throwing the others in! He's throwing 'em all in!"

Phil and Sid stood beside their chum, and gazed on the scene, which was now partly illuminated by a half moon. They saw the big Californian standing in the midst of his would-be hazers, knocking them down right and left as they rushed at him, and then, as the hidden ones watched, they saw the new student grasp Holly Cross around the waist, and, by a wrestler's trick, toss him over his back, and into the stream, where three forms were now swimming toward shore—three wet, miserable forms—three very much surprised lads

—and Holly Cross joining them by the most direct route—by an air line, so to speak.

Into the water Holly fell with a splash, and after him went Dutch. Then, seeing their two ringleaders thus summarily disposed of, the other hazers ceased their attack on Simpson.

He stood in the midst of the throng, many of whom were just arising from some terrific left-handers.

"I told you that you might be sorry," came in calm tones from the Californian.

"For the love of mustard, who are you, anyhow?" demanded Bascome, as he crawled dripping and shivering up on the bank. "Are you a champion strong man, or an elephant trainer?"

"Oh I spent one vacation traveling with a circus, and learned to do some throwing tricks," modestly explained Simpson. "And now, gentlemen, I'll bid you good-evening," and before the crowd could stop him, had they been so disposed, he walked away.

That's how Frank Simpson was hazed. Ask any old Randall graduates to tell you about it, and hear what they say.

CHAPTER XV

THE MIDNIGHT BLAZE

DRIPPING, shivering, very much chagrined, and somewhat bruised and lame from their encounter with the student they had expected to haze so easily, Holly Cross, Dutch Housenlager and the others gathered in a little disconsolate group.

Tom, Phil and Sid, hiding in the bushes, and trying to stifle their snickers of mirth, looked at the scene, which was thrown into partial relief by the moon.

"I wonder how they feel?" came from Tom.

"Don't let them hear you," cautioned Phil, "or they'll vow and declare that we were in on the game, and knew how it was going to turn out."

"That's right," agreed Sid.

But now someone in the group of hazers spoke. It was the puzzled and dubious voice of Dutch Housenlager.

"I say, does anyone know what happened?" he asked.

"We must have been struck by a cyclone," declared Holly.

"Or a waterspout," added Bascome. "Bur-r-r-r-r! But it's cold! I'm going to cut for college!"

"Who said he was easy?" demanded Holly Cross. "Was it you, Dutch?"

"Who, me? No, I never said such a thing! Perish the thought! Easy!"

"The hardest proposition I've stacked up against in a long while," said another, rubbing his elbow. "Jove! how he did hit out!"

"And so *sudden!*" commented Dutch.

"Well, did you think he was going to send word on ahead when he was going to land on you?" asked Jerry Jackson. "Come on. We've had enough."

"Too much," added his brother. "I suppose this will be all over Randall in the morning."

"Not if I have to tell it," insisted Bascome. "But Simpson may squeal."

"He'd be justified," asserted another. "He has one on us, all right."

"I believe he's too square to say anything about it," spoke Jerry.

And so it proved. The next morning, when the big Californian met his classmates, there was a calm smile on his face, but neither by word nor action did he refer to what had taken place.

But, somehow, the story leaked out. Perhaps it was because Tom, Phil and Sid could not refrain from publicly asking Dutch and the others how the hazing had resulted.

"Did you duck Simpson?" inquired Tom, as they were on their way to chapel next morning.

"Why didn't you come and help with the fun, if you're so anxious to know about it?" inquired Dutch, non-committally.

"Oh, we don't care for baths in the river this time of the year," remarked Phil, with a laugh, and then Dutch knew that the story was known, though Tom and his two chums said nothing about having been concealed where they had a grandstand view of the whole performance.

There were now busy days at Randall, for football was in full sway. As a result of the Newkirk game, several shifts were made by coach and captain, and hard practice was called for. The California lad was given a chance on the regular against the scrub, and there was talk that he would permanently replace Sam Looper. It was felt that Randall had not done herself much credit thus far on the gridiron, and there were many anxious hearts in consequence. But the members of the eleven made up their minds to do or die, and they went against the scrub so fiercely that several members of that unfortunate contingent had to go to the hospital for repairs,

or else report disabled. Then the coach and captain smiled grimly, and were not so worried about the result of the Fairview and Boxer Hall games.

It was practice, practice, practice, early and late, until some of the members of the 'varsity felt like falling on the exacting Mr. Lighton and tearing him limb from limb. But they knew it was for their good, and that they needed it.

Our three friends were in their room one evening, talking of various matters, and incidentally speculating on the loss of their clock and chair. They had not had much time, of late, on account of football, to seek for clews, and they had about given up hope of recovering their possessions.

"Well, it will soon be time to go up against Fairview," remarked Tom, as he looked critically at a big leather patch he had sewed on the shoulder of his canvas jacket. "I do hope we win."

"Same here, old man," added Phil, who was inspecting a new leather helmet he had just purchased. "I think——"

He was interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Come in!" cried Sid, who was trying to study, but making little headway at it. Frank Simpson entered.

"Well, you fellows are nice and cozy here," he remarked. "Am I intruding?"

"Not a bit! Come on in, and make yourself at home!" called Tom, heartily, shoving a pile of

miscellaneous articles off one end of the sofa, to make room for the visitor.

"Just sit down sort of easy, please," cautioned Sid, as he motioned toward the couch. "One of the bottom boards is loose, and it may come down, especially——"

"As I'm not exactly a featherweight," finished Frank. "I'll be careful. I got through with my stuff, and didn't have anything to do, so I thought I'd drop in."

"Yes, we live by the river; when you're down that way, drop in," said Phil, and there was a laugh at the joke and reference.

"I didn't see you fellows out there," remarked the lad from the West, with a motion of his head toward the stream.

"No, we had another engagement," remarked Tom.

"Speaking of engagements, reminds me of something!" exclaimed Phil, pulling a note from his pocket. "Ruth wrote me yesterday to come over to Fairview to-night, and bring you fellows. There's some sort of doings—giving a Greek play, or something like that, and a feed after it. I forgot all about it."

"Say, you're a nice one!" cried Tom, jumping up and looking at the new clock.

"I should say yes!" added Sid. "Is it too late to go now?"

"Guess not," drawled Phil. "If you fellows think we can escape the eagle eye of Proc. Zane, I'm willing, are you?"

"Sure we are!" cried Phil and Tom, eagerly. "We can pull on our best duds, and catch the next trolley. Zane can go hang! I guess we can slip in all right!"

"I reckon I'd better be off then," spoke Simpson, as he arose to go. "You haven't any too much room to get dressed, all three at once."

"No, don't go," begged Phil. "That is go and get togged up, and come back. Go along with us over to Fairview. My sister said she'd like to meet you. I was telling her about you."

"Do you mean it?" asked the Californian earnestly, for he liked social pleasures, and he had not met any girls, as yet.

"Sure, come along!" urged Tom and Sid. "We can fix you up with a girl, I guess."

"Kind of you," murmured Frank. "I believe I will go."

A little later, the four caught a trolley car for Fairview Institute, where they were met by Phil's sister and the other young ladies, who were glad to see them. There was a little amateur theatrical, followed by a dance and supper, and Frank Simpson was made to feel very much at home, for the girls took to him at once.

It was long past midnight when our four

friends alighted from the car, and stood for a moment, before starting toward their college.

"What'll we do if we're caught by Zane?" asked Tom, for there was every likelihood of that happening. They had known it all the while, but did not like to think of it when the fun was at its height.

"If he nabs us, we'll have to put up with it," said Phil.

"It's easy enough to say," commented Sid, "but you know Prexy made quite a talk about it the other day, and said that anyone who was caught out late would be severely dealt with. It might mean being barred off the team."

"Jove! You don't want that to happen," remarked Frank. "Isn't there some back way we can sneak in?"

"Proc. Zane knows 'em all," asserted Tom. "We might try it around by the chapel, though. He isn't there quite so often as he is around the court and campus."

"Go ahead," urged Phil, grimly. "Might as well be killed for a lobster as a crab."

They stole silently forward, looking cautiously around for a sight of the proctor. They had almost reached the chapel, and were hoping that the remainder of the way would be clear, when Tom, who was in advance, suddenly uttered a hiss.

"What is it?" whispered Phil.

"Zane—right ahead there."

Pausing in the shadows, they peered forward. There stood the proctor directly in the path they must cross to get into college.

"Just our luck!" groaned Sid, dismally.

They hesitated a moment, not knowing what to do. To be caught, just after the president's solemn warning, might mean severe punishment.

"Can't we——" began Tom, and then Frank Simpson, who was a little in the rear, suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"Fellows, look!" he called, in a hoarse whisper. "There's a fire!"

Startled, they looked to where he pointed. Through the windows of the chapel could be seen little tongues of flame, leaping up inside. The building was ablaze.

For a moment, the boys did not know what to do. Then Tom called:

"Come on, fellows! We've got to put that out! There are extinguishers right in the vestibule, and we can break down the door. Lively! We've got to fight the blaze, and give the alarm! Ring the bell!"

They needed no other urging. Without another glance at the proctor, who had turned back toward the college, the four lads rushed silently toward the chapel. It was the work of but a moment for their sturdy shoulders to break in the

outer door. Then, catching up several chemical extinguishers, they sprang in through the swinging inner portals. There was a lively blaze in the floor, just over the furnace.

"Douse it! Douse it!" yelled Tom, making a jump for it. "Someone ring the bell! Maybe we can't control it!"

"I'll do that!" yelled Simpson, and a moment later the deep, solemn tones of the great bell boomed out on the midnight air, while the hungry tongues of fire leaped higher and higher.

CHAPTER XVI

ANOTHER CLEW

WITH a hissing sound, the chemical streams from the extinguishers spurted upon the blaze. The fire died down around the edges of the big hole that had been burned in the floor, but in the centre there was hot flame.

"Can we get it under?" panted Sid, who, having emptied one extinguisher—a small one—ran after another.

"We've got to!" declared Phil, trying to shield his face from the fierce heat.

"If we can only keep it down until the fellows come with the hose, we'll do all right," gasped Tom, choking from the smoke. There was a high pressure water service maintained at the college, hose being connected with a big tank, for the buildings were so far from town that the fire department could not easily get there.

Again and again the alarm boomed out from the big bell, rung by the vigorous arms of the Cali-

fornian. The others kept playing the streams on the fire, retreating as it got hotter, and rushing in on it as they gained a momentary advantage.

"Aren't they ever coming?" gasped Tom. The college lads had formed an amateur fire brigade, and had frequent drills.

"They've got to—pretty soon!" choked Phil.

"Here they come!" cried Frank, and he hastened down from the organ loft, where he had been pulling on the bell rope, catching up an extinguisher as he came. Soon he was adding his stream to the others.

Outside could be heard excited yells and shouts, and the rumble of the hand hose carts as the students rushed them toward the chapel.

In a short time Tom and his chums were being assisted by scores of their mates, who, in all sorts of nondescript garments, formed a strange contrast to our four heroes, in their immaculate dress suits—no, not immaculate any longer, for they were dripping from the chemicals, they were dirty and smoke begrimed, and Tom and Sid's garments were scorched in several places by the sparks.

"Say, did you fellows stop to tog up before you came to the fire?" demanded Holly Cross hoarsely, as he directed a stream of water into the very heart of the blaze.

"Of course," answered Tom, for he saw Proc-

tor Zane coming up with two pails of water to dash on the embers.

"Well, I'll be——" began Holly, and Sid quickly stopped him with a punch in the ribs.

The fire, which had been discovered soon after it broke out, could not stand the combined assault of the water and chemicals, and, soon after the arrival of the student brigade, it was practically extinguished. It had started from an overheated flue, and had burned quite a hole in the floor, but, aside from that damage, the destruction of some pews, cushions and hymn books, the loss was comparatively slight. The valuable stained glass windows had not been harmed, though some of the delicate fresco work on the side walls was smoke-begrimed.

"Well, I guess that's out," remarked Dutch Housenlager, as he looked down into the basement through the burned hole in the floor.

"And very efficient work you young gentlemen did, too," complimented the proctor. "If it had gotten much more headway, the chapel would have been consumed. May I ask who discovered the fire."

There was a moment's hesitation. Our friends realized what it might mean to tell just *how* they had discovered it. Their chums, among whom the story had quickly circulated, kept silent.

"I heard the alarm bell ring, and I jumped up," said Jerry Jackson, innocently.

"So did I," echoed his brother.

"Who rang the bell?" the proctor wanted to know.

"Could the heat waves have done it?" suggested Professor Newton, who was much interested in science. "It is possible," and he looked up in the direction of the belfry, and shivered slightly, for he was only partly dressed.

"I rang the bell," admitted Frank Simpson, in a low voice.

"Ah, then we have to thank you for discovering the fire and giving the alarm," went on the proctor. "It was——"

"We all discovered the blaze at the same time," remarked Tom, desperately, and he indicated his companions.

"That's right," agreed Sid and Phil. They made up their minds that they were in for it now.

"Oh, you saw it from your window, I presume," went on Mr. Zane, "and you came out——"

Then, for the first time, he seemed to realize that the quartette were attired in dress-suits—wet, bedraggled, chemical-marked and scorched evening clothes—but still dress-suits.

"Oh, ah, er—that is——" he began.

"We were coming home from a dance over at

Fairview," said Phil, doggedly, "and we saw the blaze."

"Oh," exclaimed the proctor, illuminatingly, and then, unconsciously perhaps, he looked at his watch, and noted the lateness of the hour. "You four young gentlemen will call at my office to-morrow—this morning," he hastily corrected himself.

"Yes, sir," answered Tom, with a grim setting of his jaw.

An examination showed that there were no sparks left, and the students were ordered to return to their rooms. The janitors were sent for, to remain on guard and place boards over the hole in the floor.

"Don't you think he has nerve, to tell us to report to him, after what we did?" asked Tom, when, following a rather restless night, he and his chums were on their way to services the next morning. The chapel was not so badly burned, but that it could be used.

"Zane? Oh, he's *all* nerve!" declared Sid. "I almost wish we'd let it burn!"

"Shut up, you anarchist!" cried Phil. "We'll take our medicine."

But there was none to take. The proctor met them on their way to chapel, and smiled as genially as was possible for him.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "you need not

report at my office. Personally, I wish to thank you for the service you rendered to Randall College last night—or, rather, this morning," and he smiled grimly. "Had it not been for you, we should have had no chapel in which to worship to-day. I thank you most sincerely," and then Proctor Zane did an unheard-of thing. He shook hands with Tom and his chums.

"Well, what do you know about that?" gasped Phil, when the proctor had passed on.

"He didn't say a word about our being out late," came from Sid.

"Pinch me—I think I'm dreaming!" begged Tom, but they were all too interested in other matters to comply with his request.

Dr. Churchill refered to the fire in his remarks that morning, and the words of praise he bestowed on our heroes made them wish they were sitting over the hole in the floor, that they might sink through out of sight, and so hide their blushes.

Dutch Housenlager started to whistle, "See, the Conquering Hero Comes," when he saw the four approaching, but Tom upset him with a quick tackle, and Dutch subsided.

The fire and football furnished fruitful topics for conversation among the students for some days to come, so much so that our heroes had little time to think about their missing chair and

clock, until an unexpected happening brought the matter forcibly to their attention again.

They had been out together to a meeting in the gymnasium one night, and on their return, Phil, who was ahead, had some trouble opening the door.

"One of you fellows left your key in it when you went out," he said, as he removed it, and inserted his own.

"Not me," asserted Tom.

"Me either," declared Sid. "I've got mine."

"So have I," added the end.

Phil said nothing until he had entered the room, followed by his chums. Then, turning on the light, he examined the key he had taken from the door.

"Fellows, look here!" he exclaimed. "Here's a clew to our mysterious visitor and thief. This key is a false one, and has been filed down from some other kind. This thing is getting serious."

CHAPTER XVII

A CRASH IN THE GALE

CURIOUSLY, Phil's chums crowded close to him, looking over his shoulder at the odd key. As he had said, it was one apparently filed down from a larger one of different pattern, so that it would open their door.

And fit their lock it did, as they soon demonstrated, for, though crude in finish, it threw back the catch as easily as did one of their own.

"Worse and more of it!" murmured Phil, as he tried the key. "The fellow, whoever he is, must have been just going in our room when we came along the corridor, and frightened him."

"In that case, we ought to have seen him go past us down the stairs," said Sid.

"No, he could use the back flight, that goes down into the janitors' apartments," suggested Tom.

"Say!" cried Sid. "I have it. Maybe he was here some time ago, and when he went out, he

forgot his key. Let's look and see if he took anything."

"The sofa's here, at any rate," spoke Tom, with a sigh of relief. "But maybe something else is gone."

"There are too many 'may-bees' for this time of the year," declared Phil. "The fellow might have run away as we came up; he might have taken his time ransacking our rooms, for we were long enough in the gym; he may be here now; he may have brought back our chair and alarm clock—only he hasn't," he added, after a quick glance about the room. "But, as I said, what's the use of speculating on what *might* be. We've got to get busy and solve this puzzle. We've got some sort of a clew in this key."

"Not much, though," from Tom.

"I think a lot," asserted Phil. "In the first place, it shows that it's been made by an amateur, and by someone who knows a little about making keys. Therefore, as we say in geometry, we must look for a fellow who knows how to use a file and a hack saw, and who understands locks."

"Are there any such in college?" demanded Sid.

"There may be."

"Let's put it up to Zane," suggested Tom. "He's friendly with us now, on account of the fire."

"No!" exclaimed Phil, quickly. "Let's work it out ourselves. I believe we can do it."

"How?" Sid wanted to know.

"By keeping our eyes open."

"We've been doing that a long time, and haven't gotten any nearer to the mystery than we were at first."

"That's because we didn't look in the right direction," spoke Phil. "It has narrowed down now—the inquiry has, I mean. Before, we had to suspect every fellow in college. Now we need only look for one who has a mechanical turn of mind."

"Frank Simpson has!" spoke Sid, quickly. "I saw him making a new kind of cleat for his football shoes the other day."

"You're a hot detective!" exclaimed Phil, with a laugh. "Our clock and chair were taken before Simpson came here."

"That's right," agreed Sid, ruefully. "I wonder if the unknown visitor did anything to our new clock?" he went on, as he walked over to examine the timepiece. "Perhaps he left a note of explanation in it."

"But there was nothing, and the clock chimed out the time as cheerfully as ever, as though urging the new owners to never mind the mystery, since they had a better recorder of the hours than before. But the boys wanted their first love.

Our heroes were up early the next morning, to indulge in a practice run with the football squad—a little jaunt along the river, proposed by the exacting coach, with the idea of improving the wind of his men.

"Jove! but it's getting cold!" remarked Tom, as rosy and glowing with health, he and his mates turned into the gymnasium for a shower, and vigorous rub before breakfast.

"Regular football weather," agreed Sid. "Well, I feel as if I could tackle Boxer Hall and Fairview together now."

"Keep on feeling that way," urged the coach, grimly, as he passed by. "We all need it."

An unexpected storm blew up that night, putting a stop to practice on the gridiron, and the squad had to be content with indoor work. The weather grew worse, and by night there was a gale blowing.

"Old King Winter isn't far off, by the sound of that," remarked Tom, who, with his chums, was in the room, studying or making a pretense of so doing. He arose, and, going to the window, where Sid was, looked out. There came a sharp dash of rain against the glass.

"It's a peach of a night!" exclaimed Sid, as he turned back with a shiver to his comfortable nook on the old sofa.

"Yes, but we're snug and cozy here," mur-

mured Phil. "This is one of the best rooms in the college."

"If we only had our old chair," remarked Sid, rather sadly. He seemed to miss it more than the others, for it was his favorite place for study.

"Well, it won't come back to-night, at any rate," observed Tom. "Whew! Hear that wind!"

There came a sudden burst of fury on the part of the storm, that seemed to rock the very college. In the midst of its rage, borne on the wings of the wind and darkness, there came to the ears of the three lads a mighty crash.

It seemed to vibrate through the air, and then the echoes of it were swallowed up in the louder roar of the wind.

"What was that?" whispered Tom, in an awesome voice.

"Some building collapsed!" gasped Phil. "Come on, fellows, we must see what it was!" and he reached for his raincoat, the others following his example.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH HAMMER AND SAW

OUT into the storm they raced, to find that the alarm of the crash had been general, and that students from all the dormitories, and also a number of members of the faculty, were hurrying from their rooms to learn what was the trouble.

"What was it?"

"Did you hear it?"

"Is it another fire?"

"I heard it was the gymnasium that had blown up."

"Somebody told me that Prexy's house was destroyed by a bomb."

Questions and statements like those were heard on all sides, as the lads gathered in a group outside the college, or stood in the pelting rain on the campus.

The wind still blew with great violence, and the downpour was in keeping with it. Anxious eyes looked up to the sky to detect the shimmering

of flames, and were relieved when no glare met their gaze, though in that rain it would have been a big fire indeed that could have kept on burning.

"The noise was over that way," declared Tom Parsons, pointing toward the gymnasium.

"No, it was over there," and Phil indicated the river. "Maybe it was one of the boathouses."

"I think it was out on the athletic field," asserted Sid.

"Let's go have a look," proposed Holly Cross. "It was a great old crash, whatever it was."

"Yes, it woke me up," said Bert Bascome. "I was dozing over my Latin prose, and I dreamed we were playing Boxer Hall. I was making a touchdown, and smashed into a goal-post—that woke me up—or, rather, the racket did."

"Well, make a real touchdown when we play Boxer, and we'll forgive you," put in Kindlings, joining the group of football players. "Come on, let's investigate."

As the students reached the gridiron they saw, even in the darkness, the cause of the crash. One of the largest grandstands had collapsed. The supports, weakened by the rain, had been unable to stand against the force of the wind, and had tilted over, letting the whole structure come slantingly to the ground, like some cardboard house upon which a heavy weight has fallen.

"For cat's sake, look at that!" cried Phil.

"It's a ruin!" added Sid, in despair.

"The biggest grandstand, too!" remarked Tom.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Holly Cross. "Maybe we can prop it up so it won't go down any farther," for part of the structure was still standing.

Holly started toward it, but had not advanced more than a few feet, when there came another sudden burst of fury on the part of the wind, and there was a second crash in the splintered and broken timbers.

"Come back!" yelled Dan Woodhouse. "You'll be hurt! It's going to fall apart!"

There was an instinctive retreat on the part of the throng of students, but the stand, after settling forward a little more, became stationary, and, aside from the flapping of a few loose boards, the wind seemed incapable of doing any more havoc.

"Well, wouldn't that jar you!" exclaimed Dutch, as he carefully held Holly's umbrella over his own head. "We'll have to hustle to have that raised again."

"Yes, and the game with Canton Military Academy comes off soon," added Phil. "The carpenters will have to get busy in the morning. Where's Kindlings?"

"Here I am."

"Say Dan, we'll have to have a meeting of the athletic committee right away, and take some action on this. If we can't use that grandstand for the Canton game, we'll lose a lot of money, and, goodness knows, we need the coin this year."

"That's right," came in a chorus from the others. Mr. Lighton, the coach, came up just then, and agreed that immediate action was necessary, late as it was.

The students were walking about the ruined stand, oblivious to the pelting rain, and they might have stayed there a long time, had not Mr. Zane bustled up to inspect the wreck.

"Now, then, young gentlemen," he said, "you had better all get back to your rooms. There is nothing more to see, and there might be some danger. The wind is increasing."

"I hope no more stands blow down," murmured Tom.

"Mr. Zane, we want to have a meeting of the athletic committee, to take measures for rebuilding the stand," spoke the football captain. "May we?"

"To-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm going to make a report of this to Dr. Churchill, and you may come, if you like. Also Mr. Lighton, and two or three members of the committee."

"Come on, Phil and Tom," urged Dan, and the end and quarter-back followed. The other boys, finding the storm most unpleasant, now that the excitement was over, moved toward their rooms.

Proctor Zane stated the case to the president, and then Kindlings made his appeal.

"We want to arrange for the rebuilding of the stand at once," he said, "as we expect a big crowd at the Canton game, and we need all the seats we can get."

"Yes," remarked Dr. Churchill, musingly. "I presume the athletic committee has the funds available to pay for the work."

"No, we haven't, Dr. Churchill," answered Holly Cross, who acted as treasurer, "but we thought the amount could be advanced from the college treasury, and we could pay it back, as we did once or twice before. We'll need quite a large sum, I'm afraid, for the stand is one of the big ones, and is flat on the ground."

"Yes," again mused the president. "Well, young gentlemen, I would be very glad indeed to advance the money from our treasury, but, I regret to say, that it is impossible."

"Impossible!" repeated Holly.

"Yes, for the reason that there is no money in the treasury."

"No money!" The students looked at each other aghast.

"No," went on Dr. Churchill. "This legal complication regarding the missing quit-claim deed, and the lawsuit that has been started against the college, has made it necessary to spend considerable cash in the way of preliminary fees and court expenses. This has left the college without a running balance. In fact, Randall is poorer to-day than ever before. I might add that even money to pay the salaries of the faculty is lacking, and——"

There was something like a gleam of hope in the eyes of the youths, but it died away when the president, with a grim smile added:

"I will state, however, that the gentlemen of the faculty regard the financial difficulty as only temporary, and are willing to continue on without pay for a while, so you see there is no excuse for not attending lectures," and the president's eyes twinkled. "But that is why," he continued, "I can not advance any sum for the rebuilding of the collapsed grandstand. I am very sorry, but it will have to stay down for the present."

"Then we'll lose on the Canton game," spoke Sid in a low voice, "lose money, I mean."

"It's too bad we can't have it put up," came from Phil, as the lads filed from the president's room, where the conference had taken place.

"No use in having a meeting, if we can't get the money."

"Yes, there is too!" cried Tom Parsons, suddenly.

"Do you think we fellows can raise enough cash by ourselves?" demanded Kindlings. "I wish we could, but we can't."

"We can raise enough for what I am going to suggest,," declared Tom.

"And what's that?"

"Enough for hammers and saws and nails."

"And let the grandstand rebuild itself?" asked Phil, incredulously.

"No!" cried Tom, eagerly. "We fellows can rebuild it ourselves! I know how to handle tools, and I guess lots of the other fellows do, also. We can do it if we try. We haven't got the money to hire carpenters, so we'll be carpenters ourselves! We'll build that grandstand!"

"Hurrah for Carpenter Tom!" cried Dutch Housenlager, doing a Highland fling down the long dormitory corridor.

"I don't know the difference between a beam and a joist, and a two-by-four is as illuminating to me as a Greek root would be to a baby," said Kindlings, "but I'm with you, fellows!"

"So am I!" cried Frank Simpson. "I worked in a lumber camp once, and——"

"Say, is there anything you didn't do?" asked

Holly, as he thought of the hazing. "You're all right, Simpson. You can carry the two-by-fours for Kindlings."

"Make him carry the beams and joists," suggested Phil. "He'll do for that, all right."

Eagerly talking of the new idea, the boys gathered in the room of our heroes, and such a lively meeting was in progress that Proctor Zane was forced to call an adjournment, though he was very decent about it, and, hearing of the plan announced that he would amend some of the college rules, to enable the amateur carpenters to work at night, by means of powerful arc lights.

"Hurrah!" cried the lads, and Proctor Zane was cheered for one of the few times in his life. He seemed to like it, too.

A meeting of the athletic committee was called for early the next day, and the plan of having the lads do the carpenter work was discussed in all its details. There was some money available for tools, and it developed that, as Tom had said, many of the students were handy with them, some even having done carpenter work in their vacations to earn tuition money.

One of the janitors had once been a builder, and he offered to show the boys how to do the work properly, so that it would be safe.

"It will be almost as good as football practice

for us," declared Tom, when he and his chums went to town to buy the tools and nails.

"It will keep us on the jump, if we get it done in time for the Canton game," declared Phil.

CHAPTER XIX

SUSPICIONS

"HAS anyone seen my hammer?"

"Where the mischief did I put those nails?"

"Hey, Tom, give us a hand setting this joist, will you?"

"I say, Phil, should this two-by-four go in with the big side out, or the narrow?"

"Simpson, look out, or you'll saw my finger. You're too close to me."

"Wow! Ouch!" and Holly Cross dropped the hatchet he was using in place of a hammer, and held his thumb in his mouth. "Jerusalem crickets!" he cried, "I'll never be able to practice football if I keep on this way!"

There was a riot of sounds: hammering, planing, and chiseling, and sawing; and, mingled with them, the clatter of the lads' voices, in entreaties, commands, appeals for help, asking for advice, or, as Holly's was, raised in agony over some misdirected blow.

Work on rebuilding the grandstand was in full

swing. On examination of the wrecked structure after the storm, it was found that nearly all the material in it could be used over again. All the new lumber that would be needed would be some heavy joists, to take the place of those broken in the collapse.

They were quite expensive to buy, but a lumber dealer who heard of the boys' plight agreed to let them have the timber, and to wait as long as they liked for his pay. He even furnished a couple of men to raise the heavy pieces into place, and the boys voted him a first-class "sport," and sent him a season complimentary ticket to all the games.

It was not as easy as it sounds, nor as simple as the boys had expected, to rebuild the structure, but they went at it with hearty good will, and a determination, in the path of which nothing could stand. The several janitors gave them all the aid they could, but the boys did most of the work, after they were told just how to do it.

Frank Simpson was of great help, for he was probably the strongest and biggest lad in college, and the way he could shoulder a beam, and walk off with it to where it was needed in the work was something to look at and admire.

"But you fellows needn't stop work to watch Frank," said Tom Parsons, who, because of his knowledge of carpentry, and because he had pro-

posed the scheme, was, by common consent, made a sort of foreman. "Get busy, and do some of the lifting yourselves," he advised.

"I say, Tom," demanded Sid, "what makes these boards split every time I try to nail them on these four-by-fours? I must be a hoodoo, for I've split half a dozen."

"Those aren't four-by-fours," declared Tom. "They're two-by-fours, or scantling, and there are a lot of reasons why you split the boards."

"Give me one, and I'll be satisfied."

"Well, you're using cut nails, and you ought to use wire ones there, as the boards are old and dry. Then you have to nail so close to the edge that they split easier than they would if you could put the nails nearer the middle. But use wire nails.

"You mean those round ones?"

"Yes. The cut nails are those black, square-headed ones, and when you do use them, drive 'em with the widest part of the end at right angles to the grain of the wood."

"What's that, a lesson in geometry, young gentlemen?" asked a voice, and the students turned quickly, to observe President Churchill observing them with an amused smile."

"No, sir," answered Sid, "Tom was telling me how to drive nails."

"Ah, yes, a very useful accomplishment, I believe," remarked the doctor. "Though I never

could do it without hitting my thumb. A very useful accomplishment, very."

He looked at the grandstand, which was nearing completion, and, as he passed on, with a book of Sanskrit under his arm, he remarked:

"You are doing very well, young gentlemen—very well. Randall has reason to be proud of her resourceful students."

"Prexy looks worried," remarked Sid, as the good doctor passed on out of hearing.

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder but what that legal business is bothering him," admitted Tom. "It's a blamed shame it had to happen, but it's just like the Langridge breed to want to stir up trouble. Now, Sid, put plenty of nails in when you fasten two scantling together, and use the big cut ones. We don't want this stand to come down with a lot of pretty girls on it."

"I should say not!" and Sid plied his hammer with renewed energy, as though to prevent any such catastrophe.

Tom went on with what he was doing, on another part of the stand, until he was called by Frank Simpson, who wanted his opinion on a certain point.

"I think if we run these cross-pieces the other way," suggested the big Californian, "it will brace the stand better."

"So do I," agreed Tom, after an examination.

"Go ahead, do it that way, Frank. Want any help getting that beam up?"

"No, I can do it alone." Which the strong lad did, to Tom's admiration.

And thus the building work went on. True, not every joint was as even as regular carpenters would have made them, and a number of boards were sawed very crookedly, but this did not interfere with the strength of the stand, and little was cared for looks in the emergency.

President Churchill was not taking any chances, however, and he privately sent for an architect friend of his, who examined the rebuilt structure, and assured the worried doctor that it was perfectly safe.

Record time was made with the task, for three hundred willing lads can accomplish wonders, even if they lack the training of a trade. As the date for the Canton game approached, it was seen that the stand would be very nearly finished on time. It was necessary to stop work sometimes to get in football practice, but the boys were developing unused muscles, and hardening others by their labors, so that they were in fine physical trim.

"It's the best thing that could have happened," said Holly Cross to Captain Woodhouse, at the close of work one afternoon. "We'll wipe the ground up with Canton."

"Well, we ought to," declared Dan.

"Don't be so sure," retorted Mr. Lighton; "they have a pretty good team."

"Ours is improving," asserted Kindlings, proudly, and, in a measure, this was so, though there were still some weak places in the line.

It was within two days of the Canton game, and the boys were working eagerly to get the stand in shape. They had put in several nights on it, laboring in shifts, by the light of some flaming arc lamps rigged up by the college electrician.

Tom, in virtue of his position as foreman, was going about and doing as much as he could, when, as he passed near Phil, who was nailing down some of the seats, the quarter-back called to his chum:

"I say, Tom, when you have a chance just take a stroll over where that Lenton chap is working."

"You mean Henry Lenton—the freshman?"

"Yes, the chap who flocks by himself so much, and always seems to be tinkering with something in his room. See what he's doing?"

"Why; is he doing it wrong?"

"No, but you remember the queer key we found in our door that night?"

"Sure."

"Well, just think of that when you see what Lenton is doing."

Wondering what motive Phil could have, Tom

did stroll over to where, down in the front part of the stand, the odd student was screwing some hinges on the doors of a row of boxes, the seats in which sold for higher prices than the ordinary ones. Lenton was a strange lad. He was bright in his studies, and his taste ran to matters scientific. He was eager in the physics and chemistry classes, and had made a number of ingenious machines and pieces of apparatus to illustrate the forces of nature.

As Tom approached he heard the shrill scraping of a file, and at once what Phil had said about the key came into his mind.

"I wonder what Lenton is filing?" thought the end. Not wishing to seem to sneak up on him, yet desiring to solve the mystery, if there was one, Tom called:

"What's the matter? Don't those hinges fit, Lenton?"

"Some of them do, and others don't," was the reply. "Or, rather, the hinges are all right, but the hasps that hold the doors shut aren't true. I have to file some."

"Oh," said Tom, and then he noticed that the lad had rigged up a small, portable iron vise on the rail near which he was working. The vise held a piece of metal, and this the lad was industriously filing.

As Tom noticed the manner in which Lenton

handled the tools, working with files of several different sizes, the same suspicions that Phil had entertained came into his own mind. As for the files, Tom knew that none had been bought for use on the stand.

"Where did you get 'em?" he asked, picking up one.

"Oh, they're mine," answered Lenton. "I've got quite a few tools in my room," and then he drew the file back and forth over the metal, making such a noise that conversation was difficult. Tom watched him a few minutes, and then turned away.

"Phil was right," the end murmured. "There *is* something expert in the way he uses a file, and perhaps he did make the false key. We'll have to do some investigating."

CHAPTER XX

THE CLOCK COMES BACK

THEY worked on the grandstand even during the morning of the day when the Canton Military game was to be played, and then the tired but satisfied students laid aside their hammers and saws, picked up the scattered nails, and sighed with relief.

"It was a big job—bigger than I thought it was when I proposed it," spoke Tom, "and I'm glad it's over."

"So am I," added Holly. "We'll take in some money, now. I hear there's a big crowd coming."

"We may have to take some of our funds for the relief of the college, if things keep on," remarked Kindlings. "There was another meeting of the faculty this morning, about that law and claim business."

"Is that so?" asked Phil. "Cæsar's ghost! but things aren't doing a thing but happening to Randall!"

"Well, it's always darkest just before daylight," observed Sid, and then the coach came

along, and ordered them all out to light practice, in preparation for the game soon to be played.

Tom and his two chums were on their way from the gymnasium, refreshed by a shower bath, and were going to their room, to rest a bit before appearing on the gridiron with their team mates.

"Did you find out anything more about Lenton, Tom?" asked Phil, for it had been agreed that Tom was to do a little detective work concerning the queer lad and his files.

"No, nothing of any account," he answered. "I talked with some of the fellows who room next to him, and all they could tell me was that he is always tinkering on something or other. He's making some kind of an electrical machine, Perkins said, and he keeps buzzing away at it half the night. He's a queer Dick, all right, but I don't know that he had anything to do with the taking of our clock and chair."

"I've got my suspicions," declared Phil. "I'm mighty sure he made that false key to our room, anyhow, and I'm going to put it up to him some time soon."

"Oh, I wouldn't," advised Sid. "It might make trouble."

"Well, didn't he—or someone—make trouble for us?" asserted the quarter-back. "But I'll be pretty sure of my ground before I make any cracks. Now for a rest, and then——"

"A good fight!" finished Tom, stretching out his arms. "I hope we wallop 'em good!"

As both Captain Woodhouse and Mr. Lighton were sure of the ability of Randall to beat the military eleven, a number of the substitute players were allowed to go on the 'varsity team, much to their delight, for they were hungry for a scrimmage.

There was a record-breaking crowd, and the rebuilt grandstand was taxed to its capacity. Though the Canton game was one of the minor contests, it always drew well, and was quite a society function, for the school was an exclusive one. The cadets, in their natty uniforms, came almost in a body, and of course the girls were there in "beautiful bunches," as Holly Cross said. Not only damsels from the military school town, but from Fairview and from Haddonfield.

"I tell you what it is," said Holly, as he was practicing with his mates; " 'uniforms git gals,' as the schoolboy once wrote in his composition. 'If you can't be a soldier, be a policeman, for uniforms git girls.' "

"It's got 'em here to-day, all right," observed Sid. "I hope that——"

"That the heads of our particular girls aren't turned by any of the cadets," finished Phil, with a laugh.

The game was on, and it was seen that, while

Randall had every chance of beating, she would have no easy contest for the victory. The cadets played with a beautiful precision, and their team work was something that made Coach Lighton sigh in vain.

"Why can't I get our fellows to play like that?" he asked in despair of Captain Woodhouse, during a lull in the game, when one of the cadets had the wind knocked out of him.

"It's because of the changes so late in the season," declared Kindlings. "We miss Kerr and Bricktop."

"Well, go on in and do 'em up," advised the coach, as the referee's whistle blew. "Don't let 'em score on you."

"Not if I know it," answered the captain.

The game was resumed fiercely. Knowing they had little chance to win the game, the cadets devoted all their energies to trying to score. They wanted at least one touchdown, or a field goal, and Randall was determined they should have neither.

In the first ten minutes of play, Randall had shoved the ball over the line, and the goal was kicked. Then, after some rushing tactics, which demonstrated that the cadets' line was stronger than at first appeared, Phil gave the signals for some kicking plays. But it was soon demonstrated that Canton was almost as good at this as

was her rival, and while it was desired to get some practicing in punting and drop work, it was deemed too dangerous.

"Straight football," ordered the captain to the quarter-back, and the game went on in that style.

There were several forward passes, that netted good gains, and the onside kick was tried, until a fumble nearly resulted in Canton scoring, and then it was not used again.

Up the field the Randallites rushed the ball, not so fast nor so easily but what they felt the strain, and soon there was another touchdown against the cadets. There was almost another in the first half, but the whistle cut the play short, and the nearest the military lads had been to scoring was when they tried for a field goal, and failed, because Sid broke through and blocked the kick.

With indomitable energy, the cadets went at their opponents again in the second half. Several fresh players were put in, and Captain Woodhouse allowed other substitutes to try their abilities.

This nearly proved the scratching down of a score against Randall, as the new lads did not hold well in line, and they were being shoved back for a loss, when Phil called for some kicking tactics. This took the ball out of danger, and soon our friends had again crossed the military goal line.

It was characteristic of the pluck of the Canton lads that they never gave up. At it again they went, hammer and tongs, giving their heavier rivals no rest. It was a much more "scrappy" game from the point of playing, than had been expected, and on occasions excitement ran high. Several times Randall was penalized for holding in the line, or for off-side play, but this was due to the eagerness of the substitutes, who had not the seasoned judgment of the 'varsity men.

The game was drawing to a close, amid a riot of songs and cheers. Randall had rolled up a big enough score to satisfy even the exacting coach, and there were but a few more minutes left to play. Canton had the ball, it being given to her on a penalty, and they were just over the centre line, in the Randall territory. There came a signal, and the Canton left half-back was sent charging into the line between Sam Looper and Bert Bascome.

Whose fault it was no one stopped to figure out, but there was a big hole opened, Sam was sent sprawling to one side, with Bascome on top of him, and the man with the ball was through the line, running like a deer for the Randall goal line.

Sid Henderson tried for a tackle, and missed, and then George Carter, who was playing full, got ready to throw the man with the ball. But the

latter proved to be a player of exceptional ability, and speeding straight at the full-back, he suddenly dodged, so that Carter, who made a dive for him, also missed, and went sprawling.

There was now not a player betwen the Canton man and the goal line. Like mad, his friends leaped to their feet, and sent cheer after cheer ringing into the air.

"Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!" was the frenzied yell.

"After him!" shouted Captain Woodhouse. "Don't let him touch it down, fellows!"

He was running desperately, but speed was not his strong point. Tom Parsons, however, was on the alert. There was not many who could beat him at the scudding game, and he tore off over the white marks after the cadet, with a fierce desire to pull him down in his tracks. It was a hard race, but Tom won, and grappled his man in a fierce tackle from behind, not two yards from the goal line. Down they went heavily, lying there for a few seconds, the breath knocked from them both.

"Do—down!" gasped the cadet, and there were tears in his eyes, for it meant the end of the hope of his school.

"Too bad, old man," spoke Tom kindly, "but we really couldn't allow it, you know. It was a good try, though."

The other did not answer. He still had the ball, and there was another line-up, but before the play could be made, the whistle blew, and Randall's goal line was still inviolate.

"How'd he get through?" demanded Captain Woodhouse, when the cheering was over, and the players were going to the dressing rooms.

"He got through between Bascome and me," said the unlucky Snail.

"It wasn't my fault," declared the tackle. "He just pushed Sam over. It wasn't my fault."

"Well, it was *somebody's* fault," grumbled the captain, "and if it happens again, something else will happen."

There was quite a jolly time after the game, in spite of the defeat of the military lads, and the left half-back, who had made the sensational run, and who had so nearly scored, was properly lionized.

"When are you going to have another little dance, girls?" asked Tom, of Ruth Clinton and her two friends.

"When you boys have another fire at Randall," was the quick answer.

The little party of students had some refreshments together, and then, as a little shower came up, the crowd scurried for shelter, the girls going back to Fairview.

"Well, it was a pretty good game, all right,"

remarked Tom, as he and his chums were walking down the corridor to their room.

"Pretty fair," admitted Phil. "Hold on a minute, fellows; I want to see something."

"What?" asked Tom.

"If there are any more keys in the door," answered the quarter-back, "and also whether anyone is in there. Listen!"

They approached their portal cautiously, and waited in silence for a moment, but heard no sound. Then they entered, finding no false key in the lock.

But, no sooner were the chums in their apartment, than they were made aware of something strange. As if by common impulse, they came to a stop in the middle of the floor. Then Tom cried:

"Listen! Our old clock! The alarm clock!"

A loud ticking was heard—a tick different from that of the mahogany timepiece. Tom switched on the light.

There, on the mantle, in the place where it had always rested, was their battered old relic! They gazed at it, scarcely able to believe their eyes. Then Sid remarked:

"The clock has come back!"

"And only increases the mystery," added Tom, slowly.

CHAPTER XXI

SEEKING EVIDENCE

PHIL CLINTON walked over to the mantle, and, almost reverently, took down the fussy, ticking clock. It seemed to make more noise than usual, but perhaps this was because the room was so quiet, or perchance they had become used to the rather gentle tick-tock of the mahogany timepiece. The quarter-back turned the clock over and over.

"Yes, it's ours, all right," he finally announced.

"Did you have any doubt of it?" asked Tom.

"Some," admitted Phil. "There have been so many queer things happening, that I don't know whether or not to believe that we are really here, that we exist, and that there is such a place as Randall College."

"There won't be, if Langridge's father and those other lawyers have their way," declared Sid, solemnly.

Phil was still closely examining the clock, turning it over and over, and listening to the tick.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Tom. "Do

you think it's got the measles or the pip, that you have to hark to its breathing apparatus that way?"

"There's something wrong with it," declared Phil, with a dubious shake of his head. "It doesn't tick as it used to. Here, Sid, you listen to it."

Thus appealed to, Sid put the timepiece to his ear.

"Don't you remember," went on Phil, "how it used to sort of have a double tick, like an automobile with carbon in the cylinders? Sometimes it would act as if it was going to stop, and you'd think it had heart failure. Then it would get on the move again. It doesn't do that now. It ticks as regular as a chronometer."

"You're right," agreed Sid. "Here, Tom, have a hearken."

After a few minutes' test, Tom was also forced to conclude that there was something strange about the clock. Yet it was undeniably theirs.

"And it's exactly right, too," went on Phil, comparing it with his new watch, a present from his mother. "It's right to the half minute, and that's something that never happened before since the time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. Whoever had it, and brought it back, took the trouble to set it right."

Tom was now carefully looking the clock over.

He gazed thoughtfully at the back, where there were a number of turn screws and keys for winding and setting it, and uttered an exclamation.

"Fellows!" he cried, "our clock has been taken apart and put together again. See, the back is scratched where some one has used a knife or screwdriver on it, and smell the oil they've put on it."

He held it first to the nose of Sid, and then to Phil. After several detecting whiffs, they both gave it as their opinion that the clock had been given an oil bath.

"This gets me!" exclaimed Phil. "Why in the name of the seven sacred somnambulistic salamanders, anyone should go to the trouble of making a false key to our room, take our clock away, renovate it, and then bring it back I can't see for the life of me."

"Same here," came from Sid, as he slumped down on the sofa. "But we've got it back, anyhow, and isn't there a proverb to the effect that you shouldn't look a beggar in the mouth?"

"You're thinking of gift-horses," declared Tom, "but what you mean is, 'take the gifts the gods provide.' Still, it is mighty queer, and I wish we could get some clews that would help unravel the mystery—that of our chair as well as the clock."

Sid uncurled long enough to reach out and get

a book, which he began to study, while Phil set himself at some of his college tasks. Only Tom remained inactive—yet not inactive, either, for he was doing some hard thinking, in which the clock, the missing chair, and the troubles of Randall in general, formed a part. He arose and walked about the room, pausing now and then in front of the clock to listen to the insistent ticking.

"Oh, for cat's sake, sit down!" exploded Phil, at length. "I've written this same sentence over six times, and I can't get it right yet, with you tramping around like a prisoner in a cell."

"Yes, go to bed," urged Sid.

Tom did not answer. Instead, he stooped over and picked up an envelope from the floor, where it had fallen partly under and was almost hidden by a low bookcase. He turned it over to read the address, and uttered a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" demanded Sid, springing to an upright position with such suddenness, that the old sofa creaked and groaned in protest, like a ship in a storm.

"Look!" exclaimed Tom. "This letter—I found it on the floor—it's addressed to Bert Bascome—from someone in the college, evidently, for it hasn't been through the mail, as there's no stamp on it."

Sid and Phil eagerly examined the missive, turning it over and over, as if something on it might

escape them. It was a plain white envelope, and was sealed.

"That throws some light on the mystery, and bears out my suspicion," went on Tom.

"What light?" asked Sid.

"And what suspicion?" demanded Phil.

"The suspicion that Langridge has had a hand in this mystery, and that Bert Bascome has been in our room since we last left it. That letter wasn't here when we went out, I'm sure of that, so Bascome must have dropped it when he brought back the clock."

"Brought back the clock!" cried Phil. "Do you mean to say he took it—and the chair?"

"I don't know that I do, but either he or Langridge had a hand in it," asserted Tom, positively. "Langridge probably put Bascome up to it, to annoy us. You know Bascome and that bully were quite thick with each other before Langridge was forced to leave."

"But this letter isn't in the handwriting of Langridge, Tom," objected Sid. "I know *his* fist well enough."

"That's right," agreed Phil. "But I can tell you who did write this."

"Who?" demanded Tom and Sid, in a breath.

"Henry Lenton," was the quiet reply.

"What, the fellow you suspected of making the false key?" cried Tom, in startled tones.

"That's the chap. He wrote this letter to Bascome; I'm sure of it."

"Then those two are in the game against us!" came from Sid. "Oh, say, this is getting more puzzling than ever! What can we do about it—Langridge—Bascome—Lenton—who's guilty—who had our clock?"

"I'm going to find out one thing!" declared Tom, with energy.

"What's that?" asked Phil, as his chum arose and strode toward the door.

"I'm going to give Bascome this letter, and find out what he was doing in our room."

"You may make trouble," warned Phil.

"I don't care if I do! I'm going to get to the bottom of this," and holding the envelope as if it might somehow get away from him, Tom strode from the apartment, his footsteps echoing down the corridor, while back in the room his chums listened to the ticking of the clock that formed a link in the curious mystery.

CHAPTER XXII

BASCOME DENIES

TOM PARSONS knocked vigorously on the door of Bert Bascome's room. If the character of his summons was any indication of his mind, the bearer of the letter was in no mood for compromise. As soon as he had tapped at the portal, there was audible within the apartment a hasty scramble.

"Guess they must think it's Zane, or Prexy," mused Tom, grimly. He waited several seconds, and then came the gentle and somewhat sleep-simulated query:

"Who's there?"

"It's me—Parsons," was the ready, if ungrammatical, answer. "Are you there, Bascome?"

"Yes, of course. I thought it was one of the profs. It's all right, fellows—you can come out," and, as the door opened, Tom saw several of Bascome's friends crawling from under the bed and couch. There was a smell of cigarette smoke quite noticeable in the room.

"Whew! You fellows are going some!" commented Tom. "You can smell that all the way up to our room."

"No! Can you really?" asked Bascome, in some alarm. "We opened all the windows, and we fan the smoke out regularly every ten minutes; don't we, fellows?"

"Sure," replied Merkle, one of the sportiest of sporty seniors. "It's regular bore to think we have to sneak around this way when we want to smoke. Why, in some big colleges, I understand, they allow the undergraduates to smoke in their rooms, and even the tutors have a pipe with them."

"Pity this isn't a big college," remarked Bascome, as he lighted another cigarette. "I suppose I oughtn't to do this when I'm in training," he went on easily, "but you won't squeal, will you, Parsons? Have a cig. yourself?"

"No, thank you. May I see you just a moment, Bascome?"

Tom had not thought to find anyone in the room save the left tackle, and he hardly knew how, under the circumstances, to put his question.

"Sure," answered Bascome. "Anything about football? Because if it is——"

"It isn't," answered Tom, quickly.

"Oh, then, come on out. Excuse me just a moment, fellows," he said to his guests, as he fol-

lowed our hero out into the corridor. "I hope it isn't spondulix, old man," he went on. "I'd let you have some in a moment, but I'm dead broke, and——"

"I don't need any money!" broke in Tom, half angrily. "Look here, Bascome, were you in our room to-day—after the football game?"

"In your room? Certainly not, either before the game or after it. What do you mean?"

"Well," went on Tom, "there have been some queer things happening lately. Our old chair was taken—for a joke, I presume, and——"

"Do you mean to accuse me of having a hand in that?" demanded Bascome, indignantly. "If you do, Parsons——"

"Take it easy," advised Tom, calmly. "I haven't accused you of anything yet. I merely asked you if you had been in our room."

"But why do you do that? What makes you think I was in there?"

"Because I found this there—after we came back from the game this afternoon," went on the end. "It's a letter addressed to you, and I thought maybe you had dropped it."

Tom held out the missive, but, before taking it, Bascome, with a glance of anger at his companion, said cuttingly:

"Look here, Parsons, I don't know what your game is, but I think you're confoundedly insulting.

Now, before I look at that letter, I want to say, in the strongest way I know how, that I was *not* in your room to-day, nor any other day lately. In fact, I haven't been there since a lot of us fellows were talking over football matters with you and Phil and Sid one evening."

"Yes, I remember that time," spoke Tom. "Well, I believe you, of course. Here's the letter. It's mighty queer, though."

Bascome gave one glance at the missive, and murmured:

"Lenton! I wonder what he's writing about now. That fellow's off his base, I think."

As he read the note, a scowl came over his face, and he muttered something that Tom could not catch. However, the end did hear Bascome say:

"Insolent puppy! He's got nerve to write to me that way! I'll have it out with him!"

Then, with rapid motions, Bascome tore the letter to pieces, and scattered them about the corridor.

"It doesn't throw any light on the mystery that has been bothering you fellows, about your clock and chair," went on the tackle. "I had some dealings with Lenton, and this was about that."

"I didn't ask to know what was in the letter," said Tom, quickly. "The only funny part of it was that it was in our room. I thought perhaps——" he hesitated.

"Oh, don't make any bones about it," urged his fellow player. "You might as well say it as think it. You imagined I had been in there, playing some sort of a joke on you."

"Yes, I did," admitted Tom. "Our clock was returned mysteriously to-night, and the one left in its place was taken away. The other night we found a false key in our door, and now——"

"Now you find a letter addressed to me!" interrupted Bascome. "I don't blame you for thinking it a bit queer, old man, but I'm not in the game. I've got other fish to fry. The way I suppose my letter got in you fellows' room, is that Wallops, or some of the messengers to whom Lenton gave it to be delivered to me, must have dropped it there."

"But Wallops nor none of the messengers would have a right to go into our room while we were out," declared Tom.

"Oh, you can't tell what those fellows would do," asserted Bascome, easily. "I'll wager that's how it happened. Ask Wallops. I'm out of it, anyhow. I wasn't in your shack, and you can't make that too strong when you report back to Phil and Sid."

"I will," promised Tom, somewhat nonplused at the outcome of the affair. He had been sure that something would come of the connection be-

tween Bascome and the letter. "I'm sorry I took you away from your friends," he went on.

"Oh, that's all right. I'd rather have you *speak* openly like this, than be *thinking* a lot of queer things. No, I'm out of it. The letter had nothing to do with your clock or chair," and with this denial Bascome turned back toward his own room.

"Good night," he called to Tom; that is, unless you'll join us?"

He paused and looked back.

"No, thank you, I'm going to turn in."

Tom swung around, and was about to proceed down the corridor, when the torn pieces of the letter Bascome had destroyed caught his eye. By this time the other youth had entered his room, before Tom could call to him that perhaps he had better pick up the scraps.

"Oh, well, leave them there," mused Tom. "I guess if he doesn't care whether or not anyone sees them, I oughtn't to."

Slowly he walked along, when a piece of paper, rather larger than the other fragments, was turned over by the draft of his walking. It was directly under a hall light, and Tom could not help seeing the words written on it. They stood out in bold relief—three words—and they were these:

the alarm clock

Tom stared at them as if fascinated. They seemed to be written in letters of fire. He stooped and picked up the piece of the torn letter.

"The alarm clock!" murmured Tom. "I'll wager anything Lenton *was* writing about our clock, and yet Bascome said the letter didn't have a thing in it about our mystery. I wonder—I wonder if he expects me to believe that—now."

For a moment he paused, half inclined to go back and have it out with Bascome. Then he realized that this would not be the wisest plan. Besides, he wanted to talk with Phil and Sid.

"I'll tell them," he thought. "Maybe they can see through it, for I'll be hanged if I can. 'The alarm clock!' I wonder if I would be justified in picking up the rest of the pieces, and seeing what I could make of them? No! Of course I couldn't read another fellow's letter, even to solve the mystery. It's not serious enough for that."

Then Tom, after another look at the scrap he had, thrust it into his pocket, as much for the sake of preventing it from falling into the hands of curiosity seekers, as for any other reason.

"We'll see what Phil and Sid can make of it," he mused, and then, hearing someone approaching, Tom hastened on to his own room.

"It certainly is queer," said Phil, when Tom had told him the result of his little excursion. "I think I'd almost have picked up the whole letter,

Bascome couldn't have cared much about it, or he wouldn't have thrown the pieces into the hall. Guess I'll go get 'em."

"No, we can't do a thing like that," declared Sid quickly. "I know a better plan."

"What?" inquired Tom.

"Let's ask Wallops if he had a note to deliver to Bascome from Lenton. He may have gotten in our room by mistake."

"Of course!" cried Tom, quickly. "The very thing. Maybe that will help clear it up."

It was comparatively early, and Wallops was found in the janitors' quarters.

"No," he replied, in answer to Sid's inquiry, "I haven't seen Mr. Bascome or Mr. Lenton this evening, and I had no note for either of them, nor from one. And I wasn't in your room."

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Phil, quickly, for he did not want to create any talk. "I dare say it was a mistake. Come on, fellows."

"Well, what do you think now?" asked Tom, as the three were on their way to their room.

"I think either Bascome or Lenton was in our room," declared Phil.

"Yes, but which one?" asked Sid.

No one could answer him.

CHAPTER XXIII

HALED TO COURT

OUR heroes were in a quandary. They had gotten on the trail of the mystery, and it diverged in two directions. Both paths seemed to lead to one or the other of two students—Bascome or Lenton. To accuse either, or to question them, would mean serious trouble, for it would be considered as an insult. Tom and his chums realized that.

"But what gets me, if either one of them *did* take our clock and chair, is what their motive could have been," spoke Tom. "Why in the mischief should they take our battered old ticker, leave another in its place, and then make the exchange again?"

"It's just as easy to answer as to say who has our chair," declared Phil. "It isn't in Bascome's room, that's certain."

"And Lenton hasn't it," asserted Tom. "I found that out, all right."

It was the morning after the sensational dis-

covery of the letter, and they were still discussing it, without apparently getting anywhere. They had tacitly agreed that, without more evidence than they now possessed, it would be folly to go to Bascome again.

"Let's get out of here," proposed Tom, after some more talk on the subject. "We're almost late for chapel as it is."

It is doubtful if either of the three chums gave much consideration to the services that morning. Their minds were too much filled with other matters.

Dr. Churchill made an announcement to the effect that there might soon be some news to communicate in the matter of the suit against the college.

"At present," he stated, "the matter is in the hands of the lawyers, and we hope to effect a compromise. If we arrive at one, I shall be most happy to let you young gentlemen know of it. Of course, too, there is the possibility of unfavorable news. But, in any event, I know that you will be loyal to the college."

"You bet!" cried Bean Perkins, fervently, and he was not rebuked, for the devotional exercises were over.

"I wonder what Prexy meant by bad news?" asked Holly Cross, as he walked over the campus with Tom and several other chums.

"He didn't mean that we're going to lose the game with Fairview Saturday, I hope," put in Kindlings. "We're going to have long practice this afternoon, and I want every fellow to show up. Simpson, I'm going to give you a chance at left guard in the second half of the game."

"Thanks!" exclaimed the big Californian, fervently.

The practice on the gridiron that afternoon was the hardest to which the players had yet been subjected. The scrub had been instructed to play for all they were worth against the 'varsity, and the inducement was held out that if any of the second team outplayed the man against him on the regular eleven, that he could replace him in the Fairview game.

This was enough to stir the blood of the scrubs, and they went at the 'varsity hammer and tongs. The result was rather a surprise, for the regulars developed unexpected strength in the line. And even Snail Looper proved that he could do well when he wanted to, for when the backs were sent against him and Bascome, the two held well together, and the wave of human beings, of whom one had the ball, was dashed back, failing to gain in several cases.

There was one particularly hot scrimmage, and Andrews, who was playing left half-back on the scrub, went at the line like a stone from a cata-

pault. He broke through, and Pete Backus and Sid Henderson, who tried to tackle him, missed. Andrews was gathering his speed for a spring down the field for a touchdown, when Phil Clinton, who had circled out of the press, was after him like a shot, and after a daring tackle threw him heavily.

But, somehow or other, Phil slipped, and his foot was doubled under him. When he got up he limped painfully.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Lighton, anxiously, as he ran up.

"Twisted my ankle."

"Is it sprained?"

"No, only a little. I'll be all right in a minute."

They had his shoe off in a jiffy, and massaged the ankle, but it did little good, and wanting to save his quarter-back for the big game on Saturday, Captain Woodhouse sent in Art Benson, as a substitute. Phil retired to the side lines, tears of chagrin in his eyes, but his friends comforted him with the thought that he would be all right by Saturday if he rested, while, if he didn't he couldn't play against Fairview.

The game went on, and, as if nerved by Phil's injury, the 'varsity played like fiends. They rushed the unfortunate scrub team all over the field, and rolled up more touchdowns than they

had previously done in practice that season.

"I guess we'll come out all right," spoke Kindlings, gleefully, to the coach, as they walked from the field, discussing some new plays that had been tried.

"I'm more hopeful," answered Mr. Lighton.

A hot bath, a rub down and a vigorous massaging of his ankle with liniment, made Phil feel much better, and that night, propped up in an easy position on the sofa—the seat of honor—the quarter-back received his friends, several of whom dropped in to inquire after him.

Will you be fit, old man?" asked Holly Cross, anxiously. "I hear that Fairview has it in for us for keeps."

"Sure I'll be on hand," declared Phil, gamely. "This isn't anything."

"I hope not," remarked Kindlings, with a dubious shake of his head. "We can tell better in the morning." For he well knew that such injuries as Phil's often became worse in a few hours than they seemed at first.

The captain's apprehension was realized, for the next morning Phil could not step on his foot, and Dr. Marshall, the college physician, was summoned.

The doctor looked at the swollen ankle, felt of it gently, thereby causing Phil to wince with pain, and then announced:

"No playing for you, Clinton."

"But I've *got* to play, doctor. I've *got* to be in the game against Fairview Saturday. That's three days off. Won't it be well then?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Well enough to play if I wear a leather protector?"

"If you play, you may be out of the game the rest of the season," was the solemn answer. "I must forbid it. You may do yourself serious injury. What you need is complete rest."

Phil gasped, and held back the exclamation that sprang to his lips—an exclamation partly of bitterness and partly of pain, for the physician was rebandaging the foot. Then he turned his face to the wall, and when the doctor was gone, Tom and Sid sat in silent communion with their chum. For they knew how he felt, and knew that mere words could only make the wounded spirit more sore. Silence was the best balm, and silence there was, with only the fussy clock to mark the passage of the seconds.

Phil's ankle was even worse the next day, and it was announced that he would not be in the Fairview game, which news cast a gloom over Randall, and caused rejoicing in the camp of their rivals, for Fairview was none too sure of a victory, though they had a fine eleven. Benson, the substitute quarter, was slated for the contest.

There was hard practice every available moment up to the night before the game, and though the team was rather demoralized, the captain and coach, by vigorous words, kept the players up to the mark.

"We're going to win! We're going to win!" they said over and over again.

There was a noticeable air of something portending when Dr. Churchill and his colleagues took their seats on the platform at chapel the next morning. The president's voice was solemn as he read the Scriptures, more solemn as he offered prayer, and when he advanced to the edge of the rostrum to make an announcement, there was a long breath of expectation from the students.

"Is it about football or the trouble, I wonder?" whispered Holly Cross.

"Quiet," begged Tom.

"Young gentlemen," began the president, "I regret to say that I have bad news for you. Randall College has lost the first skirmish in the legal battle. The directors have been summoned to court to show cause why they should not vacate the land whereon our buildings stand. The matter had assumed a serious phase, all through the loss of that quit-claim deed."

CHAPTER XXIV

DEFEAT

THERE was a buzz of excitement; everyone was whispering to his neighbor, and there was even talking among the members of the faculty.

Dr. Churchill gave a few more facts concerning the matter, stating that though the first move had gone against the college, the Randall legal representatives hoped to be successful in court.

"I might add," went on the good doctor, "that we are making every effort to locate the missing quit-claim deed. And I might also add that if any of you young gentlemen happen upon it, the faculty and myself, as well as the directors, will be under great obligations to you, if you will turn it over to us.

"To that end, perhaps, I had better describe the deed," which the president did, at the same time making a few remarks concerning legal matters, and impressing on the students the necessity of taking care of legal papers.

"You will now know the document, if you

should happen to see it," he concluded, "though I fear we cannot hope for that. But we will not give up yet," he added, and then the exercises came to an end.

Discussion on the new development of the trouble continued, as the students filed out of chapel, and strolled across the campus, some to lectures, some to studies, while others, who had the early periods free, made for the football field.

"It's a rotten shame, isn't it?" exclaimed Holly Cross, as he dug his toe into the pigskin with vicious force. "I wish I had some of the lawyers who are making the trouble where this ball is," and as the spheroid again sailed high into the air, Holly grinned in delight at his effort.

"Yes, it's just like Langridge to make trouble," agreed Tom. "Probably he's delighted at the turn affairs have taken, and he very likely hopes to see Randall down and out."

"Well, he won't!" declared Frank, as he passed the ball to Jerry Jackson. "I feel sure we're going to win. As sure as I feel that——"

"We'll put it all over Fairview," finished Billy Housenlager. "We've just *got* to do 'em!"

"Glad you feel that way," spoke Captain Woodhouse. "But with Phil laid up——"

He did not finish, but they all knew what he meant. Up to the last, there was hope that Phil

might pull around in time to play at least part of the game, but the doctor soon put an end to this thought.

"It's utterly out of the question," he said, and Phil, with a groan, turned his face to the wall.

As if Randall did not have trouble enough, more developed the night before the game. There had been a final meeting of the eleven, and Phil had managed to limp to it on a crutch. Final instructions were given by the coach, some new plays were decided upon, and a particular code of signals, of which there were several in use, was adopted.

"No objections to taking a glass of ginger ale before we turn in, is there, Mr. Lighton?" asked Jerry Jackson of the coach, who was a strict trainer.

"I'll allow you one," he answered.

"Come on then, fellows, I'll stand treat. Got something extra in my allowance this month," went on the Jersey twin, and he led a crowd of his chums to a small refreshment place that did a thriving business just outside the college grounds.

Whether it was the ginger ale, or the excitement caused by anticipating the game, was not ascertained, but it was a fact that in the night Sid Henderson was taken ill. Tom heard his chum groaning, and, sitting up in bed, asked:

"What's the matter, old man?"

"I don't know, but I feel as if I was burning up inside."

Tom was at Sid's bed in a moment, and placed the back of his hand on his friend's cheek.

"Why, you've got a fever!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to call for Dr. Marshall."

Wallops was sent for the physician, who pronounced Sid a very sick youth, and ordered his removal to the sick ward, a sort of emergency hospital maintained at Randall.

"I shouldn't be surprised but what it was the ginger ale," said the physician, after questioning Sid. "You have a very bad bilious attack."

"Will I—will I be all right by morning?"

"By morning? Gracious, young man, what do you think we doctors are, magicians? We have to wait for Nature to help us."

"Then I can't play."

"Play? I should say not! You've got to stay in bed."

"Well, wouldn't that get your goat!" exclaimed Tom, when he heard the news. "Phil and Sid both out of the game. Now we *are* up against it, for further orders."

Phil did not answer, but he gritted his teeth, and in the darkness stepped out of bed, bearing his weight on his injured ankle. He could hardly keep back an exclamation of agony, as a sharp

pain shot through him, and he knew that what he had hoped for—that he might possibly play—was out of the question.

The day dawned cold and fair, ideal weather for football, with no wind to make kicking difficult. The contest was to take place at Randall, and the squad was out early at practice. It was rather a serious gridiron squad, too, for the absence of two of the best players crippled the team in a manner that none cared to think about.

"Jove, but I wish I was going to be with you!" spoke Sid softly, when Tom paid a visit to him, just before the time for calling the game.

"I wish you were," said the end. "I guess you'd better pray for us, Sid, for we sure are up against it."

Phil managed to limp out on the side lines, where he sat wrapped in a blanket like an Indian brave, and watched the preliminary practice, unable to keep back the tears that came into his eyes.

There was a big crowd present. Every stand was filled, and there were throngs about the field. George Carter was to play in Sid's place, and Art Benson would be at quarter. The rest of the team was made up substantially as the one that had played the previous games, save that Frank Simpson was slated to play one half at left guard, dividing with Sam Looper.

It was the first big game of the season, and

both teams were on their mettle. In the stand given over to the cohorts of Fairview there was a big crowd, of which a goodly part were girls from the co-educational institution. Their shrill cheers, songs and cries mingled with the hoarser shouts of the Fairview lads.

"I wonder if Madge and the others are cheering against us?" asked Tom, as he passed the ball to Simpson.

"Well, you can hardly blame them for sticking up for their own college."

"No, that's so. Say, they're a lively eleven, all right, aren't they?"

"They sure are! Never mind, though, Parsons, we'll go through 'em all right."

There had been many changes in the Fairview eleven, but some of the lads who had played before were on the team. There was Lem Sellig, who played quarter, instead of in his old position of left half-back, Frank Sullivan was at right end, and Roger Barns was full-back; Ted Puder was playing left guard.

The practice was over, the toss had been made, and Randall was to kick off. Bean Perkins had led his cheerers in many songs and college yells, and the colors on his cane were frayed from much waving.

The referee's whistle blew, and Kindlings, with a final glance at his own men and those of Fair-

view, nodded to Holly Cross, who was to send the ball down the field.

There was a thud as the toe of the big centre met the pigskin, and away it sailed. It was caught by Ed Turton, who was playing left half-back, and he managed to get over about fifteen yards before he was caught and heavily thrown by Tom Parsons. Then came the line up, and the first scrimmage.

At the line came Fred Hanson, the right half-back, aided by his mates. Right for a space between Bert Bascome and Snail Looper he headed, and managed to get through.

"Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" begged Kindlings, desperately, but his men were shoved back, and there was a two-yard gain. It was not much, but it showed the power that was behind the Fairview plays. There was a burst of triumphant cheers from the co-educational supporters, and silence on the part of the cohorts of Randall, as they waited for the next play. It came promptly, and netted three yards. Then a run around right end tore off four yards more, and it looked as if Fairview would rush the ball for a touchdown in short order.

But, in answer to the frantic appeals from Kindlings, his players braced desperately, and held their opponents to such advantage that Fair-

view was forced to kick, and Randall had the ball, and a chance to show what she could do.

"Now, then, boys!" cried Benson, as he began to give the signal, "tear 'em apart!"

It was a heart-meant appeal, but something was lacking. Phil's magnetic presence was needed, and though Pete Backus, to whom the ball was passed, managed to wiggle through for a yard gain, there was noticed a great strength in the line of Fairview, against which the Randall players hurled themselves. Another try only netted two yards, and then, not wanting to give up the ball by sending it sailing into the enemy's territory, Benson signalled for a fake kick, Joe Jackson dropped back, and Holly Cross snapped the ball to George Carter, who was playing in Sid's place. Carter at once passed it to Joe, who ran with it. But, alas for the hopes of Randall! Joe dropped the pigskin, and Jake Johnson, the big centre of Fairview, who had broken through, fell on it.

There was a wild riot of yells on the part of the Fairview crowd, and groans of anguish from Randall. The Fairview players quickly lined up, and almost before Kindlings and his men had recovered from their astonishment and chagrin, Fred Hanson had broken through, and was speeding for the goal line. He got past all the tacklers, and after a sensational run, planted the ball between the posts.

"Touchdown! Touchdown!" came the fierce cries. Randall realized that she had been scored upon for the first time that season, and the fact was bitter to her.

The goal was kicked, and there were six points against our friends. It was disconcerting, but they went back into the play with such fierce energy that inside of the next ten minutes they had forced their opponents up the field to their five-yard line.

"Now, boys, give it to 'em! Don't wait until you can see the whites of their eyes, but give it to 'em!" howled Bean Perkins.

"Touchdown! Touchdown!" yelled the Randall crowd.

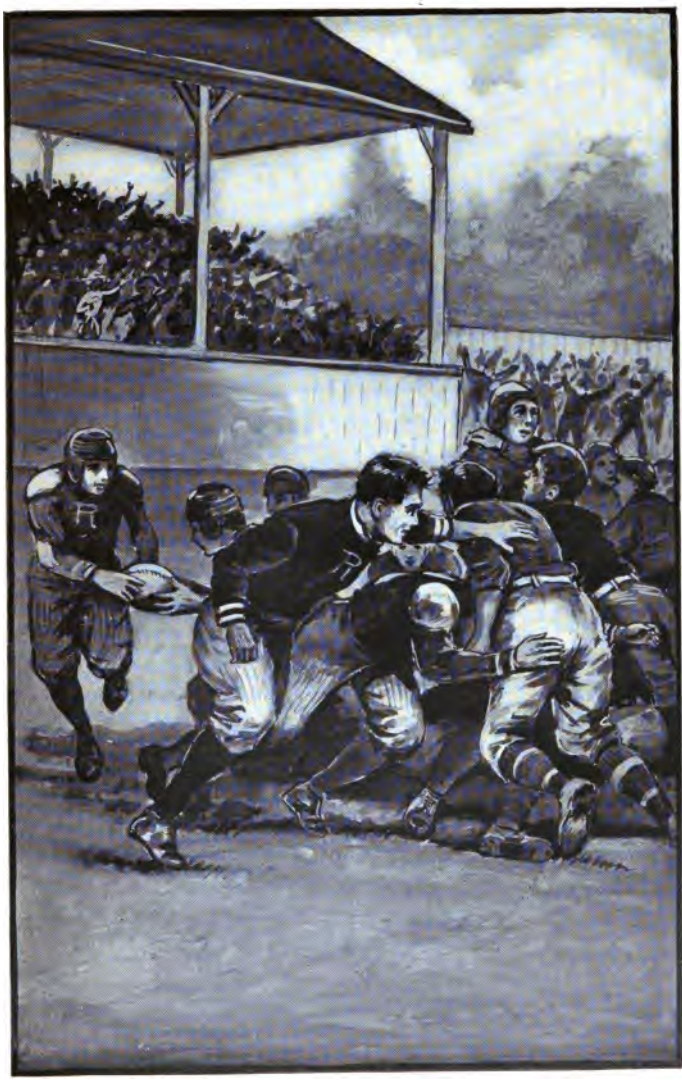
"Give 'em the good old song, fellows," fairly screamed Bean. "Conquer or Die," and he led the singing of *"Aut Vincere, Aut Mori."*

It was just the note needed to make the Randall players turn themselves into football fiends, and they ripped the Fairview line apart, and had the ball over in another minute.

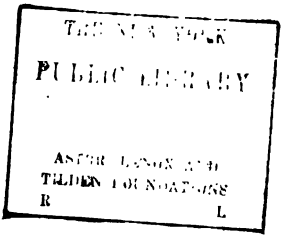
"Now, kick the goal, and tie the score!" urged Bean, but it was not to be. The ball hit the post, and bounced back, and Fairview had still one point the better.

There was hard playing the rest of the half, but neither side scored.

"Well, what do you think about it?" asked



CARTER AT ONCE PASSED IT TO JOE, WHO RAN WITH IT.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Kindlings, of the coach, during the rest period.

"I'm afraid to say," was the answer. "We'll have to do better, or——"

"Lose," spoke the captain, grimly.

The story of the second half of the game is shameful history to Randall. It started off fairly well, but there was fumbling, and even the presence of the big Californian, who replaced the Snail, could not avert the defeat that was in store.

Try as Randall did, she could not make the necessary gains, and the players hurled themselves against the stone wall defense of Fairview. On the other hand, the Fairview players found several holes in their opponents' line, through which they made substantial advances with the ball.

"Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" begged Kindlings, desperately, the fear of defeat staring him in the face. His men worked like the ancient trojans, and Tom Parsons covered himself with glory twice; once when he made a sensational tackle, and saved a touchdown that seemed imminent, and again when he made a brilliant run of sixty yards, and would have scored, but for an unfortunate slip that enabled George Curtis, the Fairview left end, to nab him.

That was as near as Randall came to scoring in the second half, while Fairview made three more touchdowns, though only one resulted in a goal. The score stood twenty-two to five against

Randall when she was awarded the ball for interference and offside play on the part of her eager rival, who wanted to roll up a bigger total. There was only a little time left to play, and Kindlings desperately called upon his men in every way he knew how to rally and score again.

There were desperate—aye, even tear-stained faces—among the Randall players as they lined up. Hearts were beating as though they would burst. Lungs were panting, and tired muscles fairly begged for relief. There came a great heave as the big Californian tore a hole in the Fairview line to let Pete Backus through, but Pete was almost downed in his tracks, and ere the line could be formed again, the whistle blew, and the game was over.

For a moment the struggling players could scarcely realize it, and then, as the truth broke over the Randall lads, and they heard the shouting of the great crowd—as they knew the score—twenty-two to five—they filed silently from the gridiron.

It is not writing of anything disgraceful against old Randall when I say that more than one player shed tears—bitter tears. And they were not assuaged by the hearty cheer which Fairview gave her rival.

"Now—boys, three—three cheers for Fairview!" called Kindlings brokenly, in return, and

his voice was not the only one that faltered when the tiger was given.

Silently the Randall crowd left the grandstands, while the victorious cohorts of Fairview were singing their songs.

"Boys!" cried Bean Perkins, eagerly, "don't let our fellows go off that way. Give 'em the 'Conquer or Die' song, but—sing it softly!"

And then, out over the big field, welled the beautiful strains of the Latin hymn. The effect was wonderful, for the boys were good singers. The great crowd halted and listened, as the last chords died softly away.

Then came a great cheer—a cheer from friend and opponent alike—a cheer for defeated Randall—for Randall that had not conquered, but had been conquered. Then the players filed to their dressing rooms.

CHAPTER XXV

BITTER DAYS

"SHALL we look up the girls?" asked Phil softly, as he clasped his arm in that of Tom's, and limped with him from the rooms under the grandstand. "They'll want to see us."

"But I don't want to see them!" exclaimed the end, half fiercely. "I don't want to see anybody. I want to go off in the dark somewhere, and——"

He stopped, for he felt a raging spirit within him that he knew was not good.

"It's tough, old man," spoke Phil, softly, "but maybe it will be best for old Randall in the end."

"Best nothing! It never would have happened if we'd had you and Sid on the team."

"Oh, yes, it might."

But Tom would not have it so, and clung to the dispute until someone started an argument about the referee's ruling on a certain point, and then the subject was quickly changed.

"Better come over and see the girls," urged Phil again, as he walked along on his crutch. "Sid

will want to know what they said, and you know he can't get out for a couple of days."

"Oh, all right," Tom almost snapped.

"They won't rub it in—they'll know how we feel," went on the quarter-back. And to the credit of Ruth, Madge and Mabel, be it said that though they were Fairview girls, and their college had downed Randall, which had not happened in a blue moon before, they never so much as "looked" the triumph they must have felt. They knew the bitterness of defeat, and—well, they were wise little damsels.

They talked of anything but football, though the reference to Phil's injury and to Sid's illness naturally verged on it. Then they got on safer ground, and, as Tom walked along with Ruth, while Phil had Madge Tyler on one side and Mabel Harrison on the other, the bitterness, in a measure, passed from them.

"We'll do up Boxer Hall twice as bad!" predicted Tom.

"That's right," agreed Phil. "I'll play then, and——"

"Don't boast!" called his sister, with a laugh.

The girls sent messages of condolence to Sid. Tom and Phil hurried to tell their chum all about it. Sid had improved enough to enable him to be moved to their room, and there, with him in bed, the game was played all over again.

"It wasn't the poor playing of any one man, or any two or three men," declared Tom. "It was the fault of the whole team. We're crippled, that's what we are, and we've got to get in shape for the rest of the season, or——"

The possibility was not to be mentioned.

"I don't suppose anything like this would happen again in years, that we'd lose so many players," spoke Phil. "We can't always play in luck."

"Kindlings feels it pretty fierce," said Tom. "He couldn't talk when he came off the field."

"Yes, it's got him bad," agreed Phil. "Well, we'll have to do better, that's all. I think Simpson is booked for good on the 'varsity, after the dandy game he put up in the second half."

"Yes," came from Tom. "The Snail means all right, but he's too slow. Frank will help the team a whole lot."

"Tell me about his playing," urged Sid, and they gave it to him, point by point.

There were bitter days for Randall following the Fairview game, and for a time it seemed that the defeat would work havoc with the team. But Mr. Lighton was a wise coach, and he only laughed at the gloomy predictions.

"Oh, we'll come into our own, soon," he declared. "Get right into practice, and keep it up."

Phil was able to be in his old place a couple of days later, and Sid was soon off the sick list, so

that the team was once more in shape. Simpson was voted a "find," and showed up well at guard. Bascome also improved under the influence of the presence of the big Californian.

"Well, I think we're gradually getting into shape again, captain," remarked the coach to Kindlings one day, after some hard practice, during which the scrub had been "pushed all over the field, and had its nose rubbed in the dirt," as Holly Cross picturesquely expressed it.

"Yes," agreed Dan Woodhouse. "We miss Bricktop and Ed Kerr, but what can't be cured must be put up in pickles, as the old woman said when she kissed the broom."

"Cow, you mean," corrected the coach.

"I make my own proverbs," replied Kindlings, with a laugh. "They keep better. But, seriously, I think we will shape up pretty well for the Boxer game. We've got a couple of contests in between, one with the Waram Prep, and the other with Duncan College. We will take both of those, and that will make the boys feel better."

"Yes, a little victory, now and then——"

"Makes good dressing on your salad," finished Dan, with a laugh.

Though football took up much of the time of our heroes, with Phil and Sid again on the active list, they had not forgotten their quest after their

beloved chair, nor had they given up their plan of discovering who took the clock.

But, as the days passed, our friends were no nearer a solution than they had been in the past. They kept watch on Bascome and Lenton, but nothing developed, and they did not like to make any inquiries.

The bitterness of the Fairview defeat still lingered like a bad taste, in the mouth of the Randall gridiron knights, but it was being overshadowed by the game which would soon be played with Boxer Hall. This season they would clash but once with those doughty warriors, and according to the games that had thus far been played in the Tonoka Lake League, the championship was practically a tie between Randall and Boxer Hall.

"If we win all our other games, and we're likely to do that," said Kindlings, "all we need to do is to wallop Boxer Hall, and the championship is ours."

"Yes, that's all," remarked Dutch Housenlager. "It's easily said, but not so easy to do."

"Get out, you old catamaran!" cried Holly Cross.

It was one morning at chapel, following the annual reunion of the "Old Grads" of Randall, that President Churchill made an announcement that caused quite a sensation.

"I have bad news to announce," he said, as he stood on the platform after the devotional exercises. "There has been a conference between our lawyers and those representing the claimants to our land. They demand twenty thousand dollars in settlement."

There was a gasp of surprise that went around the chapel like a wave of hysteria among a lot of girls.

"Twenty thousand dollars!" whispered Tom Parsons.

"Randall can never pay it," remarked Sid, who sat next to him.

Dr. Churchill waited for the murmurs to cease.

"I need hardly add," he continued, "that it is out of the question for us to pay this sum. Yet, if we do not, we may lose all that we hold dear," and the president seemed much affected. "However, we have not given up the fight, and there may yet be a loophole of escape. You may now go to your classes."

CHAPTER XXVI

MOSES IN PHYSICS

"SAY, fellows, have you heard the news?" burst out Dutch Housenlager one morning after chapel, about a week following the announcement about the twenty thousand dollars being demanded.

"News? What news?" inquired Holly Cross.

"Has the lawsuit been called off?" asked Tom.

"Or has Bricktop Molloy decided to come back to play on the eleven?" demanded Sid.

"Neither one, but we're in for no end of a lark."

"Oh, yes. If there's anything funny in the wind, you can depend on Dutch to ferret it out," spoke Phil. "Well, what is it now, you old Hollander?"

"Prof. Newton is down with the pip, or something, and can't take his chemistry or physics classes to-day. They're shy one other teacher, so Prexy is going to handle the physics recitation. What a cinch it'll be! I'm not up in mine, but Moses is sure to ask us where the lesson is. We

won't do a thing but steer him back to one we had a week ago. Then I'll be safe."

"You can, if you like," spoke Tom, "but I'm not going to. I've got mine, and it's a shame to put one over Moses."

"Aw, what's the harm?" demanded Dutch. "It will amount to the same thing in the end. Now don't go to spoiling my fun. I'm not up, I tell you, and I don't want to get any more crosses than I have. My record won't stand it."

"Then you can do the funny work," declared Phil. "If he asks any of us——"

"I'll sing out about a back lesson," interrupted Dutch. "Then I'll be safe. Anyhow, Moses will be sure to ask about three questions, and they will remind him of something about Sanskrit or modern Chinese, and he'll swing into a talk about what the ancient Babylonians did in war time. Then you fellows will call me blessed, for you won't have any physics to prepare to-morrow, when Prof. Newton will likely be back."

"Have it your own way," spoke Holly Cross.

As usual when there occurred a change in the routine of lectures or classes there was more or less of a spirit of unrest or mischief among the students. Those in the natural science division filed into the room where Professor Newton usually held sway, and it was quickly whispered about that "Moses" would appear to hear them.

The venerable president entered with his usual book under his arm, for he studied early and late —harder than the "greasiest dig that ever kept the incandescent going," to quote Holly Cross.

"Ah, young gentlemen," began Dr. Churchill, blandly, "I presume you are surprised to see me, but your instructor is ill, and I will endeavor to take his place. You are—er—you are in advanced science, are you not? I believe I have the right class," and the good doctor, somewhat puzzled, consulted a memorandum slip in his hand. "Yes, this is the class," he went on, with an air of relief. "Now, to-day's lesson was to be on —er—I'm afraid I have forgotten. Professor Newton told me, but it has slipped my mind."

It was exactly what Dutch Housenlager had counted on, and he was ready to take advantage of it.

"But of course," continued the president, with a smile, "you students will know where it is." He opened the physics book, and leafed it over, as though the lesson would be disclosed to him in some supernatural way. All eyes turned to Dutch, for his impending game had become whispered about.

"I think it's page three hundred forty-seven, Dr. Churchill," said Dutch, mentioning a lesson about a week old.

"Ah, yes," went on the president. "I see. It

has to do with heat and cold, sudden changes of temperature and the effects produced by each. Very interesting, very. I trust you are all prepared?"

"If we aren't, it's funny," murmured Dutch, for they had recited on it several times in review.

"Speaking of the changes produced by sudden changes of temperature, can you give me a common example?" asked the president, his eyes roving about the room. Dutch seemed so eager to recite, and have it done with, that his agitation could not but be noticed. "You many answer, Mr. Housenslager," finished Dr. Churchill.

"Ice and snow," came the ready reply. Dutch breathed easy again. He thought he was done for the day.

"Very true," continued Dr. Churchill easily, "but that is a little *too* common. I referred to the Prince Rupert drops. I dare say you all know what they are. Mr. Housenlager, you will kindly explain to the class how they are made, the effect they produce, and what principle they illustrate."

The doctor sat down, and all eyes were once more turned toward Dutch. Nearly every lad in the class could have given some sort of answer, for they had seen the curious glass drops broken by their regular teacher. But, as it happened, Dutch had been absent when that subject came up, and, as he made it a practice never to inquire what

went on in the lecture room when he was not present, he was wholly at sea regarding the drops. He had a hazy idea regarding them, however, and resolved to hazard a recitation. It was better than complete failure.

As "every schoolboy" (to quote a well known authority) knows what the Prince Rupert drops are, I will only state that they are globules of glass, pear shaped, with a long thin "tail" of the same brittle material. They are formed by dropping molten glass into water. The outside cools quickly, a long tail is formed, and there results an unequal strain on the glass, because the outside part has cooled faster than the inside. The instant a small part of the "tail" is broken off, the entire drop crumbles to glass-dust, the pressure once more being equalized.

It was this object and phenomenon that Dutch was called on to recite about. He rose in his seat, and began with an air of confidence that he did not feel:

"The Rupert drops illustrate the power of hot water or steam. They are globules of glass, filled with water, and, when they are heated, they burst to pieces, showing the expansive force of heat."

The class wanted to roar. Dr. Churchill raised his eyebrows in surprise. Dutch had described another glass object used in the class room, and his explanation of that had been correct, but it was

as different from a Prince Rupert drop as a ham sandwich is from chicken.

"Ah—um," mused the president, putting on his glasses, and gazing at Dutch through them. "Very interesting, Mr. Housenlager—very—but—hardly what I asked you."

"I—er I—er—I'm afraid I'm not prepared, sir," stammered the fun-loving youth, and the smiles went round the class.

"Too bad—don't you want to try again?" asked the president.

Dutch thought, and thought hard, but the more he tried to use his brain, the more foreign Prince Rupert seemed to him. He gave it up.

"Failure," murmured Dr. Churchill, as he marked it down against Dutch. "You may try, Parsons."

Tom gave the right answer. Dutch gave a gasp of surprise, and it was noticed that he paid very close attention to the rest of the lesson. But it did not go much farther, for, as Dutch had predicted, the president soon got on a strain that interested him, and, ignoring the text book, which was opened at the wrong page, he swept into a talk on something about as far from physics as is bookkeeping.

But the "goose of Dutch had been done to a lovely brown," once more quoting Holly Cross. His trick had turned against him, for, had he given

the proper page, or had he allowed anyone else to do so, the chances are that he would not have been called on. He made himself conspicuous, and so fell before the good doctor.

"Well, Dutch," remarked Holly, as they filed from the room, "don't you want to try it on again in our Latin class?"

"Cut it out!" advised Dutch gruffly, as he marched on. "I know when I've had enough."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DANCE CARD

"You look all right, Sid; you'll pass!"

"Hey! What's that?" and Sid Henderson swung around from the mirror over his bureau, with a somewhat guilty flush on his face.

"I said you'd do," repeated Tom, with a mischievous grin, as he stood in the doorway of the room, having paused in the act of entering. "What were you doing, putting on a beauty mark, or looking to see if you needed a shave?"

"I was trying to get my tie straight," growled Sid, as he fastened his low cut vest, for he was in his evening clothes.

"Get out, you musty old misogynist!" exploded Phil, following Tom into the room. "We know what you were doing, all right. You wanted to see if you were good-looking enough, so that you could dance with Mabel all the evening."

Sid looked around for something to throw at his tormenting roommates, but nothing was handy. Besides, he might crack the stiff bosom of his

shirt, the snowy expanse of which reflected back the glow of the incandescent light.

"If you fellows are going to the racket, it's about time you togged up," went on Sid, as he carefully took a seat in a chair. He did not sink luxuriously onto the sofa this time, for fear of "mussing himself up," as Holly Cross would have said.

"Oh, we'll be ready in jig time!" cried Phil, throwing his coat on one chair, his vest on another, and, almost before the garments had landed in "artistic confusion," he was changing his shoes.

"We went to a football meeting," explained Tom, as he shed his ordinary raiment and proceeded to "tog up."

"Anything doing?" asked Sid, as he manicured his nails.

"Oh, for the love of tripe! Look at him!" cried Phil, with his head half way through a clean shirt. "Say, you'd think he was going to a coming-out party, instead of to a Fairview frat. dance. Oh, Tom, is my back hair on straight?" and Phil, who had uttered the last in a shrill falsetto voice, tried to look at the after-portion of his shock of football hair.

"Say, when you fellows know how to act like gentlemen instead of like a bunch of rough-necks, I'll talk to you," spoke Sid, with dignity. "I asked you a question, Tom."

"Oh, yes, about the football meeting," went on the end. "Well, you needn't get on your ear just because we jollied you a little. Stand the gaff like a man. No, there wasn't much doing. We talked over some new plays. Incidentally we tried to explain the slump Randall seems to be up against, but we couldn't. Where were you?"

"Don't ask him. He was up here fussing worse than a girl," broke in Phil. "Hannibal's henpecked hyperbolas! But do you remember the time, Tom, when we couldn't get Sid to look at a girl, much less to take one to a dance? Now he feels hurt if he doesn't do the Cubanola Glide with one at least once a week. Vanity, thy name is Sid Henderson!"

"Oh, cheese it, for cats' sake!" begged Sid, in despair. Then Phil, who seemed to take delight in "rigging" his chum, glanced at the battered old alarm clock, which was again on duty.

"Cæsar's grandmother!" cried the quarter-back. "I'll be late," and forthwith he began to make motions "like a fellow dressing in a hurry," as he said afterward, and Sid was left in peace to complete his immaculate attire, while Tom, too, seeing the need of haste, left off "badgering" Sid.

It was the occasion of one of the several dances that the girls of Fairview Institute had arranged, and to which they were allowed to ask their friends. Of course, Miss Philock, the preceptress,

was chief chaperone, and there were other elderly teachers who took part.

Tom, Phil and Sid, together with a number of other students from Randall, had been invited, and this was the evening when "event number six, in the free-for-all-catch-as-catch-can style of dancing would be pulled off," as Holly Cross remarked, when he was preparing for it. It was about a week after Dr. Churchill had so taken the wind out of the sails of Dutch Housenlager in the physics class, and in the meanwhile life at the college had gone on much as usual.

The affair took place in the Fairview gymnasium, which was appropriately decorated for the purpose. Tom and his three chums—for Frank Simpson went with them—had called for Miss Tyler and her friends, Ruth and Mabel. Frank was to escort a new girl, Miss Helen Warden, to the dance.

"You're a little late," chided Ruth, as she greeted her brother and the others.

"It was Sid's fault," asserted Phil, with a wink at Tom. "He *would* insist on changing his togs at the last minute."

"And the hairdresser disappointed him, and he had to curl it himself," put in Tom.

"You—you——" spluttered Sid, and then he choked back his justifiable wrath.

"Don't mind them," sympathized Mabel Harri-

son. "We know some secrets as well as they, Sid."

"Oh, I'll get back at 'em some time," predicted the stocky half-back.

There was quite a throng at the dance when our friends arrived, and shortly after the girls came from the dressing rooms, the orchestra began a dreamy waltz. The lads led out their partners, and the gymnasium presented a brilliant and animated scene.

"Did you see him?" called Tom to Phil, as the two young men and their pretty partners swung near each other in the middle of the big waxed floor.

"Who?" asked Phil, slowing up.

"Langridge," was the reply, and then they were too far apart for more conversation.

"Oh, dear, did *he* come?" asked Ruth of Tom, and she seemed distressed. "I do hope he and Phil——"

"No danger," interrupted Tom. "We'll keep clear of him. What girl has he?"

"I can't imagine. I'll look when I see him dancing with her."

Tom pointed out his former enemy, as he swung his partner around again, and Ruth exclaimed:

"Oh, she's that new girl! Miss Rossmore is her name. I guess she doesn't know Mr. Langridge—very well."

"Probably not," agreed Tom, and then the dance came to an end in a crash of melody. There was applause for an encore, and once more the strains were taken up, and the youths and maidens were treading the misty mazes of the waltz.

The custom prevailed at these fraternal society affairs of the lads taking their partners' dance programmes and filling the cards for them. This was usually done in advance, and insured a girl plenty of dancers with partners of whom her escort approved. For he would only put down, or allow their owners to, the names of his own friends. It was a sort of "clearing-house" of dances, and the lads lobbied among themselves, and "split" numbers with each other at their own sweet will, in order to "fill in."

"I've got to get one more partner for you," remarked Tom, when the second half of the waltz had come to an end. "I'll be back in a moment, and leading Ruth over to where her friends were seated, Tom scurried off toward some of his chums, in order to impress one of them into service for his fair partner. There was one vacant waltz on her card, and Tom himself had been booked for that number with Miss Tyler.

"I want one for Miss Clinton," called the pitcher, as he slid into the group of his chums.

"Put me down!" exclaimed Jerry Jackson eag-

erly. "She's one of the best waltzers here. Put me down, Tom."

"All right," and Tom reached in his pocket for the card. It was not there, and a puzzled look came over his face. "Jove, I must have lost it!" he exclaimed blankly, as he looked back over the route he had taken. As he did so he saw Garvey Gerhart approaching, holding out one of the dance orders.

"I think you dropped this," murmured the crony of Langridge. "I just picked it up."

"Thanks—very much," exclaimed Tom, in relief, and taking the card, he had the Jersey twin scribble his name on the only vacant line.

"I put our friend Jerry down for you," he explained to Ruth, as he joined her.

"Thanks," she murmured. "Oh, there's that lovely two-step. I can't dance that enough!" and her little foot tapped the floor impatiently. Tom led her out as the music welled forth.

All too soon it was nearing the end of the little affair, for, though it was not late, the rules of Fairview forbade any extended festivities. Tom, who had been dancing with Miss Harrison, was walking over to claim Ruth for the next number, when he saw Langridge stepping toward her.

"Confound him!" thought Tom, an angry flush mounting to his face, "is he going to speak to her again?"

Such was evidently the intention of the former Randall bully. He was smiling at Phil's sister, who at first did not notice him. Langridge and Tom reached her at about the same time, and what was our hero's surprise to hear his enemy say:

"I believe this is our dance, Miss Clinton?"

She turned in astonishment, a wave of color surging into her fair face.

"Our dance—yours——" she stammered.

"I have your name down on my card," went on Langridge calmly, "and I believe if you will look at yours that you will find mine on it."

Hastily Ruth caught up her dance order, which dangled from her fan. As she scanned the names, the color of her face deepened.

"Why—why—it—it *is* here," she murmured. "I did not know—Tom, did you——"

"Most certainly *not!*" declared Tom, as emphatically as he could without attracting too much attention. "I think you are mistaken, Mr. Langridge," he added stiffly. "I booked no dance for Miss Clinton with you."

"Perhaps you had better look at the card," replied the bully, sneeringly.

Tom gave it a hasty glance. There was no doubt of it. There, in bold writing, on a line where he was sure he had scribbled his own name, was that of Langridge. It was the last dance but two, and Tom had the last one. He was also

sure he had this one, and yet the name of his enemy——

"There must be some mistake," he said, in confusion, for sometimes mistakes would occur in the indiscriminate trading of cards among friends. "But I'm sure I never gave you that card to fill out, Mr. Langridge."

The bully shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know that you figure in this at all," he said, with a sneering air. "I have this dance with Miss Clinton. May I have the honor?" and he bowed gracefully to the confused girl, and held out his arm.

"I—I don't——" she began, in distress.

"This is not your dance," declared Tom, glaring at Langridge, reaching out his hand toward his own partner.

The rivals faced each other. Rivals again, though on a different field than the baseball diamond. An angry light gleamed in Tom's eyes—on the face of Langridge there was a supercilious sneer. They stood thus, at one side of the ballroom floor. The music was playing softly, and some were dancing, but the impending scene between Tom and Langridge was attracting attention.

Ruth realized it, and was very much distressed. Tom was determined not to give way, but he realized that to make further claim against Langridge

would have the effect of causing a most unpleasant affair. He felt that there was something wrong somewhere.

It was Frank Simpson who saved the day. The big Californian had seen at a distance what took place, and had guessed what was going on. Also he had overheard a little of the conversation, and he was able to fill in the rest.

He sauntered slowly up to the trio, and, with an air of good fellowship, which he assumed for the occasion, he clapped Langridge lightly on the back.

"Hello, old man!" he exclaimed. "We'll meet soon on the gridiron, I hope."

"Yes," answered Langridge stiffly, turning aside. "Miss Clinton, will you——" He paused suggestively.

"No!" whispered Tom. "Your name never got on her card right."

"Take care!" almost hissed Langridge.

"No, it is you who must take care!" broke in Simpson, leaning forward as if he was talking on ordinary topics to the three. The crowd saw, and taking the very view of the little gathering that the big Californian wished them to, they turned aside. "It is *you* who must take care, Mr. Langridge," went on Frank. "I saw you write your name on Miss Clinton's card."

"What!" The bully's eyes blazed.

"Easy now," cautioned Simpson, in calm tones. "Tom, you dropped your partner's card a while ago, didn't you?"

"Yes!" The end was beginning to understand now.

"I happened to be standing behind a pillar," went on Frank, "when I saw Langridge pick it up. I saw him erase a name and substitute another, but I thought nothing of it at the time, as lots of the fellows had girls' cards, filling them out. Then I saw Mr. Langridge hand the dance order to a friend of his, who started toward you with it, Tom, just as you discovered your loss."

"Gerhart—he handed it to me!" gasped Tom. "I see now! Langridge, you——"

"He tried to play a sneaking trick, and was caught at it!" broke in Simpson. "Now, Mr. Langridge, I'd advise you to leave this dance!" and the voice of the big Californian grew stern as he looked full into the eyes of Langridge.

Without a word, but with a glance of hate at Tom, the bully swung around and crossed the room, threading his way amid the dancers.

"Thanks, old man!" exclaimed Tom, fervently, to Frank. "You save us—saved Miss Clinton—an unpleasant time."

"Indeed you did," spoke Ruth, holding out her little hand. "I don't know how I can repay you. I did not look at my card when Tom handed it

back to me, but when I saw—saw that name there, I—I knew I had never let him put it down."

"Here!" exclaimed Tom, taking the order. He scratched out the offending name. "It's gone now," he added, with a laugh.

"I am in your debt, Mr. Simpson," went on Ruth.

"Then repay me sometime by saving a dance for me," spoke the lad from the Golden West, as he bowed and moved away.

"I think this is our dance—*now!*" spoke Tom, with a smile.

"Oh—Tom!" exclaimed the girl, "I—I think I'd rather sit it out."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LEGAL BATTLE

LANGRIDGE left the gymnasium immediately after the unpleasant scene, and Gerhart soon followed. In a manner, the evening had been partly spoiled for Ruth, but her girl chums gathered around her, and succeeded in bringing back a smile to her face.

She and Tom "sat out" the dance over which there had been a dispute, and in a palm bower they talked of many things. Miss Clinton begged off from her partner in next to the last dance, but she did the closing number with Tom, who wished that the music would never cease.

But the dance finally came to an end with a crash of melody, and though the youths and maidens applauded vigorously, the tired musicians put away their instruments and departed.

"Well, it's over," spoke Tom, regretfully, as he escorted his fair companion toward the dressing room.

"Yes, but it was—glorious while it lasted!" she exclaimed, with brightly sparkling eyes. She was herself again.

"When is the next one?" he asked, eagerly.

"Oh, you greedy boy!" she cried. "I'll let you know, however. We can't have them too often. The ogress objected to this one, as it was."

"Meaning Miss Philock?" asked Tom.

"No one else. I'll be out soon, and then we'll go home. There are Madge and Mabel."

Tom and his friends went to have a final cup of coffee, before starting off with the girls, and while they were drinking the beverage, Frank Simpson remarked:

"Well, we ought to know this week whether we're going to have a Randall College any more or not."

"How so?" asked Phil.

"The real legal battle opens in court to-morrow. I heard Dr. Churchill telling Mr. Zane about it this afternoon. It seems there is a certain point to be argued before they get at the main issue, and whichever side wins this point will have the advantage, and practically get the case."

"What sort of a point is it?" asked Tom, who had a little leaning toward the law.

"Blessed if I know?" replied the Californian. "It was too deep for me, though I heard Moses mention it. There was something about a writ of

certiorari or *lis pendis* or an injunction, or something like that."

"Maybe the college authorities are going to ask for an injunction to prevent Langridge and that crowd from interfering until the football season is over," suggested Holly Cross, hopefully.

"What? Do you imagine that all Moses and the others have to think of is football?" demanded Phil. "I tell you, fellows, this is a serious matter. I'd hate to see old Randall done away with."

"So would we all," declared Kindlings. "But maybe we'll win in court, just as——"

"As we didn't against Fairview, but as we're going to do against Boxer Hall!" interrupted Tom, with energy, and then he saw Ruth beckoning to him, as she stood with her chums, most bewitchingly arrayed in a fur coat. "Come on!" called Tom to his friends, and soon they were escorting the girls home.

There was some expectation when the students at Randall assembled in chapel the next morning, and it was borne out by an announcement Dr. Churchill made.

"Perhaps some of you have heard of the further rumors going about concerning our difficulties," he said, gravely. "I beg of you to pay no attention to them. The case is far from settled, though within two days it may progress much

toward that end, either for us—or against us. I now wish to state," he went on, after a pause, "that the faculty as well as the directors have been summoned to court to-morrow and the following day, so that Randall will be without a teaching force. You young gentlemen will be given two holidays from your lectures and studies, but I request that none of you leave the vicinity of the college in that time. Mr. Zane will be in charge. I believe that is all," and the president bowed to the students.

"Wow! Think of it! Two days off!" whispered Dutch.

"You'll practice football as you never did before," declared Kindlings with energy. "It isn't going to be all cakes and ginger ale for you, Dutch, my lad!"

There was much jubilation among the students at the prospect of an unexpected vacation, and even that day, preceding the two days' holiday, the spirit of unrest was manifested, so that lectures suffered.

Early the next morning, President Churchill and the entire faculty took the train for the county seat, where the legal battle would be fought in the courthouse. The president and the instructors were needed to give evidence as to how long Randall had been in undisturbed possession of the land, as the college lawyers hoped thus to prove

their right to it, even without the lost quit-claim deed.

"Now, young gentlemen," began Proctor Zane, when the authorities had departed, "I shall expect implicit obedience from all of you in this emergency. I want no skylarking or horseplay," and as he said that he looked directly at Dutch Housenlager.

"Oh, no, we won't do a thing," promised the fun-loving lad. "Will we, Holly?"

"Speak for yourself. I'm going to practice kicking," declared the big centre, as he walked over toward the gridiron with a ball under his arm, followed by a number of the eleven.

Kindlings and the coach took advantage of the free time to insist on thorough practice, and an impromptu game was arranged with a nearby preparatory school for the following day, while for the present the 'varsity would have the scrub as opponents. There was a noticeable improvement on the part of the regular eleven, and Captain Woodhouse felt much encouraged.

"I say, fellows," remarked Dutch Housenlager, as he strolled into the room of our four chums that night, and found Frank Simpson there, "I've got a great idea."

"What is it, to set the college on fire, transport it bodily to some other location, or some other

cute and infantile bit of cutting-up like that?" asked Tom.

"Neither, you old catamaran! But Zane has his hands full with the freshman class. Particular hob has broken loose over in their dormitory, and 'Zany' is at his wits' end. Now, what's the matter with some of us getting into his room, and upsetting it a bit, to pay him back for what he's made us suffer? How's that for a joke?"

"Too kiddish," declared Phil. "If you can't think up anything more lively you'd better go to bed, or join the freshies. Come again, Dutch."

"Say, it's a wonder you fellows wouldn't think up something lively yourselves, once in a while," protested the big lad. "You want me to do it all, and then you blame me if it doesn't come out right. Name something yourself, Phil Clinton," challenged Dutch.

"Oh, get out, we're going to have a game of chess," declared Sid. "Keep quiet."

"Well, if you fellows don't want to have a good time, I'm going to," declared Dutch, with an injured air. "I'll find someone to do the trick with me, and then you'll wish you'd come along."

"Fare thee well," mockingly called Tom, after the departing student.

Dutch managed to get Holly Cross and the two Jersey twins into his scheme, and the four lads, after ascertaining that the proctor was busily en-

gaged trying to bring order out of chaos in the freshmen ranks, made for Mr. Zane's room.

"We'll make him think a cyclone has broken loose," declared Dutch, gleefully. "It will be rich."

Now Mr. Zane was the personification of neatness. His room was as well arranged as the stateroom of the captain on an ocean liner. There was a place for everything, and everything was always in its place.

But the mischief-making students had not been inside more than three minutes, before the apartment did indeed look as though a looting burglar had been at work. Drawers of bureaus were pulled out, books were scattered all about, the chairs were piled up on the tables, a couch was turned over, and some of the incandescent light bulbs removed.

"Now let's turn every picture with the face to the wall," proposed Dutch, with a chuckle.

"Great!" declared Joe Jackson.

"Immense!" echoed his brother.

They were in the act of turning the etchings and engravings about face, when there came a sudden knock at the door. If thunder had sounded in the room the lads could not have been more surprised. They looked at each other in consternation. The knock was repeated.

"Co—come in," stammered Holly.

Slowly the portal was pushed open, and, there, standing in the hall, was Professor Emerson Tines, with a small valise in his hand.

At the sight of the confusion that reigned in the proctor's well-ordered apartment a look of amazement spread itself over the face of the Latin instructor. His jaw fell, and the valise did likewise. Then he snapped his teeth together, there came a glinting light into his eyes, and with a frosty smile he spoke.

"Good evening, young gentlemen," he said, as he stepped into the room.

"Caught!" murmured Dutch, as he let a picture swing back into place. "Caught!"

CHAPTER XXIX

ONE POINT LOST

FOR a moment there was silence—portentous, momentous silence, while "Pitchfork" gazed at the astonished lads, and as they returned his stare.

"Well," remarked the Latin professor, as he advanced farther into the room, and looked about at the confusion on every side, "I see that Mr. Zane is not here."

"N—no—no, sir," answered Dutch, for Mr. Tines was looking directly at him, and seemed to expect him to reply. "He—he has gone out."

"Which is evidently the reason *you* are here, committing these acts of vandalism!" said the professor, bitterly. "I am ashamed of you! To think that Dr. Churchill, myself and the other teachers could not go away for two days without you students behaving yourselves like this. it is disgraceful, shameful!"

He spoke as though the whole responsibility of the college rested upon himself and the venerable president, whereas it was common knowledge that the plan was being considered of dropping Mr.

Tines and getting a more popular professor, as well as a proctor who was more in sympathy with the boys.

"We—we only wanted to have some—some fun," went on Dutch, who, having acted as leader in the prank, thought it was his duty to defend his friends.

"Fun!" burst out Mr. Tines. "Do you call this disgraceful vandalism *fun?*"

"We—we meant it as such," went on Dutch.

Professor Tines only sniffed. Probably he did not know what else to do.

"You young gentlemen—I had almost said ruffians," he finally remarked, "you will remain here until I return. Perhaps you may be able to tell me where Mr. Zane is."

"I—I think he is in the freshmen dormitory," replied Holly Cross, who had been puzzling his brain trying to think of a reason for the unexpected return of Mr. Tines.

"Ah, thank you. I will find him, and return here. *You* will kindly remain. I wish him to see his room—*as it is.*"

Professor Tines turned about stiffly, and left. The four lads gathered together in the centre of the apartment, a miserable and forlorn quartette.

"Who'd have thought he'd show up?" demanded Dutch, as if it was against the rules for such a thing to be done.

"I didn't," declared Jerry.

"Me either," echoed his twin brother.

"Well, he caught us with the goods, all right," said Holly.

"I—I wonder what he'll do—he and Zany?" ventured Dutch. "Shall we stay?"

"Got to," was Holly's opinion, and indeed the request of the professor was equivalent to a command—under the circumstances.

They waited there in misery until the Latin instructor and Mr. Zane came. The gasp of astonishment and dismay that the proctor gave as he saw his room was evidence enough of the manner in which he viewed it.

"This is what I found them at when I returned —most unexpectedly," said Mr. Tines, with a wave of his hand toward the shrinking youths. "If I were in your place, Mr. Zane, I would make them restore everything to rights, and then inflict such punishment as would cover the case. Disbarment from athletics would be none too severe, as I see that all these are members of the football team."

There was a gasp of dismay from the four, they had not bargained for that.

"I came back unexpectedly," went on the professor. "Dr. Churchill had forgotten some papers to be used in the lawsuit, and I volunteered to return for them. Getting here unexpectedly, I

looked for you, Mr. Zane. I knocked at your door. I was bidden to enter. This—this—" and the professor made a dramatic gesture, "this is what I beheld," and he waved his two hands hopelessly at the confusion.

As yet the proctor had said nothing. He looked at his dismantled room as though he could not comprehend it. Never—never had he beheld it in this way before, not even when he moved from one apartment to another, nor when a section of the building in which he had his study was rebuilt.

"I was in the freshman dormitory—there was a little—ahem—a little difficulty there," and the proctor hesitated. "I had no idea——"

"If I were you I would make them put everything exactly as they found it," interrupted Mr. Tines, severely.

"I—er—I—that is—I think I would prefer to straighten matters out myself," said Mr. Zane hesitatingly. It was as though he was in a daze. "You—you young gentlemen may go to your rooms," he added, softly.

"What!" cried Professor Emerson Tines. "Aren't you going to——"

Then he realized that he was infringing on the prerogatives of the proctor, and he kept still.

"You may go," said Mr. Zane, softly, and Dutch and his mates went.

It was not long before the news buzzed in every dormitory of the college.

"Served Dutch right," declared Tom. "He ought to have known better."

"Yes, but if Zane and Pitchfork take him and Holly and the twins off the team," suggested Phil, "then we *will* be in the soup, for further orders."

It was a direful thought, and no one liked to dwell on it. There was a lot of talk, and much speculation as to how "Pitchfork" had managed to get back unobserved. There were also guesses as to what would be done with the culprits.

Then something new developed. It concerned the excitement in the freshman ranks. There had been considerable horseplay, it was said, and Mr. Zane had indignantly ordered it stopped. To his surprise, the students not only obeyed him, but his pardon was formally asked in the name of the class, and he was given a ringing round of cheers.

"Oh, *that's* the noise we heard," commented Tom. "I thought they were raising the roof."

Whether it was the unexpected compliment paid to him, or a feeling of commisseration for the four culprits was not made known, but, at any rate, Proctor Zane inflicted absolutely no punishment on Dutch and his mates. He did not even refer to the subject again, though Professor Tines was seen in excited conversation with him. Perhaps the trouble in which Randall was involved,

and a feeling that he was not as well liked as he might be, influenced Mr. Zane.

So Dutch and his three chums breathed easier, and the football team blessed its lucky stars that it was to lose no more men.

Professor Tines went back to court early the next morning, taking with him the documents forgotten by the president. He gave out no news of the court proceedings, which indeed had not been opened as yet.

But word of them was received on the second day of the absence of the faculty. It was when the Randall 'varsity was returning from the game with the preparatory school, having won by an unexpectedly big margin. The players were feeling jubilant, and were telling each other what they would do to Boxer Hall.

"Hello, there's prexy!" exclaimed Tom, as he saw the venerable president strolling over the campus toward his residence.

"Let's ask him what happened in court," suggested Phil. "He won't mind, for he knows we're anxious."

The little squad of players surged up around Dr. Churchill.

"Can you tell us—that is—is Randall safe?" stammered Phil, as he looked up into the President's face, his mates anxiously surrounding him.

"I regret to say that we have been defeated in the first—ah—scrimmage, I believe you football players call it," said the doctor, a bit sadly. "We have lost the first point in the main legal battle."

CHAPTER XXX

AN UNEXPECTED CLEW

FOUR lads sat in various ungraceful if easy attitudes in the room of our heroes one evening. Four—for Frank Simpson was now an accredited member in full and regular standing of the "Big Four," as they were coming to be called.

Frank had moved his belongings into the apartment of the three chums, who were now four, for he found their comradeship congenial, and they liked him immensely.

It was a week after the announcement by Dr. Churchill of the setback the college had received in the opening of the legal battle.

Football practice had, naturally, gone on as usual, and there was a more hopeful look on the faces of the captain and coach. The team was playing more as a unit. Kicks were being handled better, the ball was being advanced with greater certainty in the games with the scrubs, and it looked as if Randall would come into her own

again. They had played another minor game, and had rolled up a surprisingly big score.

"But the trouble of it is," said Tom, as he got in a more comfortable position on the creaking sofa, "the trouble of it is that Boxer Hall is doing just as well. She's cleaning up everything that comes her way."

"But we have a look-in at the championship," declared Sid.

"Yes, if we win the game Saturday against Pentonville Prep.," agreed Phil.

"Oh, we'll do that all right," declared Frank.

The football situation in the Tonaka Lake League was peculiar that year. In spite of the fact that Randall had not done well and had been beaten by Fairview, the latter college had "slumped" so after her victory over Randall that she was practically out of it as regards the championship. Should Randall win the game against Pentonville, which was almost a foregone conclusion, there would be a tie between Boxer Hall and the college of our heroes for the championship. It was this knowledge which made the players, coach and captain a trifle nervous, for so much depended on the final struggle that was close at hand.

Would it be Randall or Boxer Hall that would carry off the honors of the gridiron?

"Well, we'll play our heads off, that's all I can

say," remarked Tom, as he glanced over the sporting pages of a paper. "I see that they're trying some new kicking game at Boxer."

"Yes, they're always after fads," declared Phil. "But straight football, with some of the old-fashioned line bucking, such as we play, and two halves, are good enough for me."

"Same here," agreed Sid.

"I guess nothing will come of that law business before the final game, eh, fellows?" went on Tom, who seemed anxious about it.

"No danger of a decision from the courts right away," said Frank. "From what I can hear, our lawyers are going to get back at Langridge and his partner in some new kind of an injunction or a *lis pendis* or a *whang-doodle.* That may make it look like a white horse of another color."

They talked of football and the legal tangle at some length, and were deep in a discussion about a certain wing-shift play, when tramping footsteps were heard down the corridor.

"Holly Cross," ventured Sid.

"Dutch Housenlager or—an elephant," predicted Tom. "He walks as though he had his football shoes on."

"Perhaps he's coming to suggest another trick on the proctor or Pitchfork," suggested Phil, for the latest attempt of Dutch was a standing joke against the fun-loving student.

"Hello, Dutch!" greeted Tom, as the big guard entered. "Anything wrong?"

"No. Why?"

"Oh, I didn't know, but I thought you looked as if you just met the proctor, who made you sweep and dust his room."

The others joined in the laugh against Dutch.

"Oh, can you fellows ever forget anything?" he asked, in accents of deep disgust, as he looked about for a place to sit down. "Where's the seat of honor, anyhow?" he demanded. "Am I to sit on the floor?"

"Oh, suit yourself," remarked Phil. "Our seat of honor hasn't yet come back from the realms of mystery."

"No, hang it all!" exclaimed Sid. "I'd give a good deal to know who has our old chair."

"What! Haven't you got that back yet?" asked Dutch. "Seems to me if I were you I'd make it a point to go in the room of every fellow in college until I found it."

"We've practically done that," declared Phil. "In fact, we've done everything but offer a reward, and I guess we'll have to do that next."

"Just what sort of a chair was it that you lost?" asked Frank Simpson. "I've heard a lot about it since I came to Randall, but I don't exactly know whether it is a Turkish rocker or a Chinese teakwood affair with a cold marble seat."

"It was the easiest chair you ever sat in!" declared Tom.

"A regular sleep-producer," was Sid's opinion.

"Nothing like it ever known when you came in all tired out from football practice, as I did to-night," spoke Phil. "It rested you all over, and now we only have the couch, and Tom or Sid have that all the time now, so I don't get a chance at it."

"Get out, you syndicated cynic!" cried Tom. "You're always on the 'lay' when I come in. But, Frank, seriously, this chair of ours was the real thing. It was a beaut, and I haven't been able to find one like it since. It was an heirloom!"

"It was a relic of the dark ages!" broke in Dutch. "Say, Simpson, you'd ought to have seen it! That chair was broken in the back, the seat was humped up like a camel with the heaves, both cylinders were cracked, the gears were stripped smooth, the differential was on the fritz, there wasn't a tire on it without a puncture, it had the pip and the epizootic, and, to crown it all, when you sat down in it you never knew whether you were going to get out of it alive or were a prisoner for life on hard labor."

"Soak him!"

"Traitor!"

"Put him out!"

"Roll him under the sofa!"

"That'll do for you, Dutch!"

These were only some of the things that Tom and his mates called at the big guard as he went on slandering the precious chair. Frank Simpson sat an amused witness of the little scene.

"It was pretty big, wasn't it?" he ventured, at length. "That chair, I mean."

"As if we were talking of anything else," retorted Phil. "Yes, it was big and heavy and clumsy—about fifty years old, I guess, and it disappeared just before the clock went off on a vacation, and came back so unexpectedly. By the way, fellows, we're as far from that mystery as ever."

"Don't speak of it!" begged Sid.

"Did your chair have a sort of reddish-brown cover on it?" went on Frank.

"That may have been the color once," broke in the irrepressible Dutch, "but it was sky-blue pink when it walked away, for these fellows used to empty their ink bottles on it, and use the upholstery for a blotter."

"Cheese it!" cried Tom. "Yes, Frank, the cover was a reddish-brown."

"And were the legs carved with claws, and the arms with lions' heads?" went on the Californian.

"Exactly! Say!" cried Phil, "like the dervish in the story of the camel, have you got our old chair?"

He arose, and fairly glared at Frank. The lat-

ter, too, had been growing more serious as he proceeded with his questions. Sid and Tom leaned forward eagerly, and Dutch looked on, wondering what was coming next.

"I haven't got your chair," went on Frank, "but when I know what kind it is, as I do now for the first time, I think I can give you news of it."

"Then, for the love of Mike and the little fishes, speak!" cried Tom.

"Or forever after hold your peace," chimed in Dutch, solemnly.

"Where's our chair?" demanded Phil, dramatically.

"I was passing a second-hand store, the proprietor of which also does upholstering as a side line," went on Frank, "when, happening to glance into the left-hand—no, I think it was the right-hand —window, I espied——"

"Oh, put on more steam!" begged Tom.

"I saw a chair," went on the Californian, "a chair that I am sure must be yours. It was exactly as you have described it. I thought it looked to be quite a relic."

"Where is that second-hand place?" cried Phil and Tom in a breath, while Sid grew so excited that he grabbed Frank by the arm, and held to him as if he, too, might vanish as had the chair. "Where is it? Where is it?"

"In Haddonfield, on a little side street that runs up from the depot. I don't know the name of it," answered Simpson.

"Decker Street," supplied Tom. "About the only place we didn't look, fellows. I didn't know there was a second-hand place there."

"There's only this one!" said Frank. "But he has your chair!"

"Hurrah!" cried Phil. "On the trail at last! Where's my cap?" and he began looking about the room.

"Where you going, this time of night?" demanded Dutch.

"Over to Haddonfield to get that chair, of course," replied the quarter-back. "Come on, Sid and Tom."

They were enthusiastically hunting about for their hats and coats, which were never put in the same place twice.

"I'll go along and show you," volunteered Frank. "But he may be closed now. It's after nine. We won't get to town until nearly ten."

"We'll make him open up if we have to get the police," declared Sid.

"Sure!" exclaimed Tom.

"Fellows, it's too late to go to-night," said Dutch, seriously. "You can't run any chances of Zane catching you, especially as the big game with Boxer is so near at hand. If you're caught it may

mean being ruled off the team, and you ought not to take chances."

The four hesitated. It was their chair against the eleven, for they knew that there had been a number of college rule violations of late, and the proctor was unusually strict. They might be caught and punished.

"Morning will do," insisted Dutch, who, if he did not care much for the chair, did have the interests of the eleven at heart.

"It won't do, but I suppose we'll have to wait," conceded Phil, slowly. "Jove! It's tough to almost get your hands on it, and then have to hold back. Why didn't you tell us this before, Frank?"

"I didn't see the chair in the window until day before yesterday, and then I never thought it could be yours, until we got to talking about it to-night."

"And to think that we may have it back tomorrow," murmured Tom. "It seems too good to be true! I wonder how it ever got away?"

"I don't know that, but I do know that we'll chain it fast when we have it again," declared Phil, and then they made Frank tell all over again how he had happened to see it, and how it looked.

CHAPTER XXXI

AFTER THE CHAIR

THE four chums begged off from football practice directly after the first lecture the next morning, when they had a clear period until noon.

"Say, what's up?" demanded Kindlings, to whom they made the request.

"We want to go to Haddonfield and get our chair," explained Phil.

"And you want me to knock out a morning's practice, when you know how much the team needs it," went on the captain, reproachfully.

"We don't need it—so much," declared Sid.

"No, you fellows think you're perfect, I guess," and the captain looked injured, and spoke sarcastically.

"It isn't that," said Tom, eagerly, "but if we *don't* go, our chair may vanish again. We'll put in hard practice when we come back."

"Oh, well, then, go ahead," conceded Kindlings, after a consultation with the coach. "I'll mak-

you *pay* for it, though. If we lose the Boxer game, it will be up to you fellows."

"We won't lose!" declared Tom, confidently.

They caught the next trolley car for town, and, piloted by Frank, headed for the second-hand shop on the little side street.

"Now we'd better map out a plan of campaign," suggested Phil, as they neared the place. "If we go into the place, and demand the chair, the fellow may insist that he has a good claim on it, and raise a row. We can't take it away by force, and——"

"We sure *can!*" broke in Tom, indignantly. "That chair is our property, and we have a right to take it wherever we find it."

"Suppose the dealer bought it in good faith from some one who stole it from our room?" asked Sid.

"That makes no difference," went on Tom, who thought that perhaps some day he would study law. "If the dealer hasn't a good title to it, he can't claim it. We can take it away from him."

"How?" asked Sid. "Get a policeman and have him ride it away for us in the patrol wagon?"

"Yes, we could do that," agreed Frank, "but it would be sure to raise a row, and draw a crowd, and then folks would blame it on the pranks of some of the Randall boys. We can't afford to have that happen. Prexy wouldn't like it."

"But we've got to get our chair," insisted Sid.

"Isn't there some sort of a legal way of doing it?" asked Phil. "Can't we go to court and get a search warrant."

"What we need, in case we locate the chair, is a writ of replevin," declared Tom, as if he knew all the ins and outs of the legal game.

"Is replevin any relation, say a second cousin, to *lis pendis?*" asked Frank, who seemed to have a special fondness for that term.

"Nothing like it," asserted Tom. "To replevin your goods, it means you get a court order to take them wherever you can find them. Now my plan is this: We'll go into the store, look around until we locate our chair, and then boldly demand it. If the fellow refuses to give it up we'll go get a policeman, and swear out a warrant against him for receiving stolen goods. That's what it amounts to, and we three fellows are witnesses enough, and can prove that the chair is ours."

"Good!" cried Phil. "We're with you, Tom."

No better plan having been proposed, Tom's was agreed to, and they proceeded on toward the shop, having come to a halt to discuss the situation.

Eagerly they peered forward as they swung around the corner. Each of the three wanted to be first to sight their beloved chair. As for Frank, he felt that he had already seen it.

"That's the place," suddenly remarked the Cal-

ifornian. "That shop with the spinning wheel sign over the door. It's a queer old place, kept by a down-east Yankee, to judge by his talk."

"The worst kind of a fellow with whom to talk business such as we have," said Sid. "He'll stand on his rights to the last inch or penny. But there's no help for it."

They were almost in front of the place now, and they strove to appear indifferent—as though they were merely strolling by; for, as Tom said, first they wanted to catch a glimpse of their chair in the window, and then they would have the evidence they needed.

Four pairs of eyes were turned simultaneously toward the dingy casement, in which stood an odd assortment of chairs, tables, small sofas and other antique furniture. Four gasps of breath told more plainly than any words the shock of surprise that followed the glances.

"It isn't there!" cried Tom.

"It's gone!" added Sid.

Truly enough there was no big, old-fashioned, easy chair in the window.

"Maybe it's in the other," suggested Frank. "I told you I wasn't sure whether it was the left or right window."

Phil darted across the doorway.

"It isn't over here, either!" he cried, as a rapid survey of the contents of that window disclosed

the fact that it contained only some brass warming pans, a broken spinning wheel, some andirons and fire tongs.

"Perhaps it's inside," came from Frank. "This fellow changes his window goods every other day to attract trade. Let's go in."

There was nothing else to do after they had assured themselves, by eager glances through the windows, that their chair could not be seen from without.

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you today?" asked a little wizened man, with a much wrinkled face, as he came forward, briskly rubbing his hands. His face was smooth shaven, and seemed to be made of some kind of upholstery leather. His blue eyes were deep set, under shaggy brows. "Like something to furnish your college rooms with?" he went on, making a shrewd and correct guess as to their character. "I've got some sporty things, all right."

"Real sporty, eh?" asked Tom. "Something that will make our den look homelike?"

"Sure. Why, I can sell you a pair of andirons dirt cheap. Real antiques they be, too. Come over in the *Mayflower*. Then I've got a lot of Revolutionary muskets and swords you can hang up on the walls, and make it look like a regular den. Could you use a spinning wheel? I've got a dandy that just came in. I sold one like it to

some girls from Fairview Institute the other day, and they paid me a good price. I could let you have this one a little cheaper, if you bought all your stuff from me. You're from Boxer Hall, ain't ye?"

"No, from Randall!" exclaimed Phil, indignantly.

"I—I meant to say Randall all the while!" exclaimed the man, in some confusion. "I don't know what's gittin' into me lately. Guess I need a new pair of eyes. That's twice I made a mistake like that. I might have knowed you was from Randall, of course. You fellers are goin' to beat them all holler in the championship game, ain't ye?"

"We hope so," answered Phil, "but we came to look for an old easy chair. We need one for our room, and we heard you had one that would suit us."

"Easy chairs for college rooms? Why, I've got 'em by the bushel!" exclaimed the man, eager for business. "Look here!" and he led the way to the rear of his shop. "I've got 'em in Colonial style, early English, Flemish, Louis the Fourteenth, and almost any kind you like. What'll you have?"

The chums eagerly looked around the shop. Their chair was not in sight. Somehow their

hearts sank, and they hardly dared ask the next question.

"Let's see a good, old-fashioned, easy chair. We don't care whether it's early Flemish or late Irish," said Phil.

"Something like the one you had in your window the other day," put in Tom. "A friend of ours saw that one, and told us about it. We'd like to look at that."

The dealer, who had been marching hopefully toward the rear of his shop, suddenly paused. He turned around and looked at the boys.

"Were you meanin' a big chair, with reddish-brown velour on it, and——"

"Claw legs!" interrupted Sid, eagerly.

"And lions' heads on the arms," put in Phil.

"That's it!" cried Tom. "Where is it? Show us that one!"

The dealer glanced at them sharply.

"Well, now I'm monstrous sorry," he began apologetically, "but I just traded that chair—traded it last night..

"Traded it?" gasped Frank.

"Last night?" echoed Sid.

"Yes," went on the dealer. "I had no call for it. You see, that old-fashioned upholstered stuff is out of date. What folks want now is real antiques like Louis the Fourteenth, or Mission.

Mission is great stuff! Now I've got a Mission chair, in real Spanish leather, that——"

"How'd you come to trade our chair—I mean the one we *hoped* to call ours," and Phil quickly corrected himself, for it had been decided they would make no claim until they had assured themselves that it was really their chair.

"Well, the fact is a feller who's in the same line of business as I am wanted it more than I did," explained the Yankee dealer. "He offered me two spinning wheels for it, and I took him up. I've got quite a call for spinning wheels. Them girls over at Fairview College likes 'em for their rooms."

"That's so," murmured Phil, regretfully. "Ruth told me she got one the other day for their den."

"And you traded off our—I mean that easy chair?" went on Sid.

"Yes, I couldn't get rid of it, so I let it go."

"How'd you come to get hold of it?" asked Tom.

"Who'd you trade it to?" inquired Frank, and his question was the more practical. Yet the dealer answered Tom first.

"I bought it from a Hebrew peddler," he replied. "He come along one day with a load of stuff, and offered me the chair with some other things. Said he'd been buying 'em up at different

colleges around here, and trading stuff for 'em. So I took the chair, and it was one of the few times I've been stuck. Still, I didn't make out so bad, as I got the spinning wheels for it."

"So you can't show it to us," spoke Sid.

"No, that chair's gone. But I've got lots of others. There's one real antique, in horsehair, and——"

"No, thanks!" interrupted Phil. "We'd slide off that every time we tried to go to sleep, it's so slippery."

"Then there's that Mission——" began the dealer, eagerly.

"No, we want one like that one which was in the window," spoke Tom.

"By the way, with whom did you say you traded it?" asked Frank, casually, as if it did not matter.

"I don't know his name," spoke the dealer. "I've done some business with him before, but not much."

"Is he in Haddonville?" Phil wanted to know.

"No, he's out in the country somewhere. Lives on a little farm, I believe, and does the furniture business as a side line. He also upholsters chairs, I understand. It was some name like Cohen, or Rosasky, or Isaacs—I really forget. But now, if you're lookin' for chairs——"

"No, thank you," interrupted Tom. "I don't

think we care to look at any to-day. If you could put us on the track of the one we saw, we might get that, and then we could buy others of you." He added this as a bait to the trader.

"Well, I'm very sorry, but I can't, for the life of me, think of the name of the man who took that old chair," declared the dealer. "But if it was a spinning wheel now, or something in Mission, I could——"

"Come on, fellows," interrupted Tom, sadly. "I—I guess we don't want anything to-day."

"Now I've got a real gem in Louis the Fourteenth," went on the man eagerly.

"No," said Phil, decidedly.

"Or early Flemish."

"Nothing doing," declared Sid.

"Or a Colonial sideboard and a warming pan —a warming pan is dead swell in the room of a college lad."

"No, we don't——" began Tom.

"Let's jolly him along," whispered Frank Simpson. "We want to get on the trail of that Hebrew. Now if we buy—say, a warming pan, of this man, he may give us more information..

"Right!" whispered Tom, eagerly. "Why didn't I think of it myself? Of course! We do need a warming pan," he went on, winking at Phil and Sid, who at first thought their chum was out of his mind. Now if we could get a nice cop-

per one, pretty good sized, it might do in place of the chair."

"For you to sit on," murmured Sid, keeping a straight face.

"I've got just what you want!" declared the dealer, happy now at the prospect of business. "Come back this way to the warming pan department. I've got one that came over in the vessel that followed the *Mayflower.*"

"It must have been the *Jilliflower,*" murmured Sid, with a silent chuckle.

CHAPTER XXXII

"THIS ISN'T OURS!"

HALF an hour later Tom Parsons and his chums left the antique upholstering shop, richer in the possession of an old warming pan, which they did not want, poorer in the sum of six dollars, but also possessing more information than they at first had regarding the Hebrew to whom had been traded their old chair—or, at least, the chair they hoped would prove to be theirs.

"His name is a common Hebrew one," the dealer told them, when he had been thawed out by the trade, "but I don't believe it was Cohen. Anyhow, he lives on the Medford Road, just beyond the village of Rosevale. I remember that, because he told me how long it took him to drive in from there. But if he shouldn't have the chair on which you fellows seem so bent, I can fix you up. I've got an ancient Colonial one that——"

"I guess we've got all we need to-day," said Phil, as he and his chums walked out. "Whew!" he exclaimed, as he stood on the sidewalk. "If

we hadn't made a break when we did, he'd have sold us a Spanish sideboard or a Holland tiled fireplace. Come on, fellows, we must get on the trail of this Hebrew gentleman."

"I'm afraid we can't to-day," spoke Tom.

"Why not?"

"Kindlings will want us to get into our football togs as soon as we get back, and jump out at practice. No chance to chase off around the country, looking for an unknown furniture dealer out Rosevale way."

"That's so," agreed Sid. "Well, we can go to-morrow."

"I'm full up with lectures to-morrow," objected Phil.

"Well, some of us can go," declared Frank. "We mustn't let that chair get away again." For, though he was a new chum, he felt the same interest in the recovery of the missing piece of furniture as did his friends. "I can stand a few more cuts, and I can get off right after practice."

"Maybe I can go with you," suggested Tom.

The two did manage to get away the next day, taking a trolley car as far as it went, and hiring a farmer to drive them to the village of Rosevale, a quaint little place. The farmer said he knew of no second-hand furniture dealers in that vicinity, but the boys had hopeful visions, and, dismissing their rig, as they intended to hire another in which

to drive back, they tramped along the country roads, making inquiries wherever they could.

But fate was against them. Late that afternoon, having covered many miles, they gave up, and made arrangements to be driven back to where they could get a trolley car to Randall.

They had called on many men who dealt in old furniture, and some who made a specialty of upholstering. Some were Hebrews, and some were not. But none had the chair they sought.

"I wonder if that Yankee was fooling us?" asked Tom.

"No, I guess he meant all right, but he couldn't tell us any better than he did," replied Frank.

"And we're out six bones for that warming pan," went on Tom, regretfully. "We'll have to see him again."

They did, but the dealer insisted that he had told them to the best of his ability. He offered to get the man's name and correct address the next time he saw him, but this was not likely to be soon.

In the meanwhile our friends were without their chair, and their spasmodic efforts to discover the mystery of the clocks had amounted to nothing.

"I tell you what it is," said Kindlings to them one day. "If you chaps don't perk up, and come to practice a little oftener, you'll find yourselves

on the side lines when the Boxer game comes off."

That put more "ginger" into Tom and his chums, for they had been rather neglecting practice of late in their efforts to locate their chair. They had, however, almost given up ever seeing the ancient piece of furniture again.

In the meanwhile matters concerning the lawsuit were not going any too smoothly. A most careful search had been made for the missing quitclaim deed, and without it, it was rumored, the court proceedings must soon come to an end, with the eviction of the college authorities from the ground in dispute.

There were dark days for Randall, and only the hope of winning the football championship kept up the hearts of the students. Nor was this hope any too strong, for there were whispers as to the prowess of Boxer Hall. Randall had won her final game before the big struggle, and now was devoting all her energies to playing off the championship tie.

New plays were tried and rejected. A different code of signals was put in vogue, for it was rumored that Boxer Hall was "on" to those in use.

"They say Langridge is playing his head off this year," declared Tom one night, when a crowd of the football boys had gathered in the room of our friends.

"Maybe he'll go stale," suggested Holly Cross.

"He won't if he can help it," was Sid's opinion. "He's been waiting all season to get a whack at us fellows."

"Well, it will make the game lively," declared Kindlings. "We'll give Boxer Hall all she wants."

Jerry Jackson, who was sitting on the old couch with Sid, moved to a more comfortable position.

"I say," he drawled, "it's a wonder you fellows wouldn't either renovate your furniture, or else get some new. Joe and I got some swell stuff the other day from an old Shylock of a chap that has a joint out Rosedale way."

"Out where?" asked Tom, quickly, catching at the name.

"Out in a little place called Rosedale," repeated Jerry.

"I guess you mean Rose*vale*, don't you?" asked Sid. "We heard of that fellow, but we couldn't find him."

"No, I mean Rose*dale*—d-a-l-e," spelled Jerry. "He's an ancient Hebrew—rather a decent chap, too, and he had a lot of antique stuff. Joe and I bought a fine sofa."

"A peach!" declared the twin brother. "You can go to sleep on it standing up."

"What's this fellow's name?" asked Phil, quickly.

"Rosenkranz," replied Jerry. "But he hasn't got any more sofas. We bought the last one."

"Has he any chairs?" inquired Sid.

"A raft of them."

"And his place is in Rose*dale*, and not Rose*vale?*" spoke Tom.

"That's it," the Jersey twin asserted. "The two places are in opposite directions. I guess we ought to know. Joe and I were out on a walk one day, and we saw the sofa in his window. He has his shop in one side of his house—a queer old place with a lot of Russian brasses. He had one samovar that was a pippin, but he wanted eight dollars for it, and the sofa broke us."

"Fellows!" cried Tom, excitedly, "I believe we are on the right track at last!"

"Track of what?" demanded Jerry.

"Our chair," and Tom quickly told what little was known. "It's evident," he said, "that the Yankee dealer got twisted between Rose*vale* and Rose*dale*. They're as alike as two peas."

"Then it's Rose*dale* for ours as soon as we can get there in the morning!" cried Phil. "This time I hope we're on the right trail.

"Yes, we've been in the right church, but the wrong pew, so often that it's getting to be monotonous," commented Sid.

Mr. Rosenkranz proved to be a Hebrew gentleman of the old-fashioned type — venerable,

with a long, straggly beard. He greeted the boys courteously when they called on him two days later, as that was the first chance they had to make the trip.

With a voice that trembled with hope, Tom asked about an old-fashioned easy chair.

"Sure I have him," declared the Hebrew, eagerly, scenting a trade. "Ven effer you vants an easy chair, comes you to Isaac Rosenkranz, und you get him. I show you!"

The boys followed him to the rear of the store. There, amid a pile of broken furniture, old stoves, odds and ends that seemed utterly worthless, but which seemed to constitute the entire stock-in-trade of the dealer, they saw a big chair.

"That's it!" cried Phil, eagerly.

"Ours—ours!" gasped Sid.

"No mistake this time," murmured Tom. "Chair, allow me to present you to our new member, Frank Simpson; this is the chair you have heard so much about."

"Are you sure of it?" asked the big Californian, as he pretended to make a bow to the article of furniture.

"Sure, we can't be mistaken," declared Phil. "There are the claw feet, lions on the arms, and all that. That's our chair."

"Your chair?" asked the dealer, quickly. "Ha, yes, I see, if you *buys* him!"

The boys looked at each other. What was to be done? At length Tom hit upon the simplest plan. It was no doubt their chair, he explained, and he told how it had disappeared. They could recover it by process of law, he went on, when Mr. Rosenkranz evinced a desire to hold it, but they would pay a reasonable price for it.

"Mind you, only to get it back in a hurry, though," declared Tom, "for it's ours by right. But I think it will be a lucky hunch for the football team, if we get it before the big game with Boxer Hall Saturday. So, Mr. Rosenkranz, how much do you want for it?"

The dealer named a preposterous sum, but the boys were shrewd, and beat him down. Finally, when he had admitted that the chair was not likely to sell soon, because it was in poor repair, he consented to part with it for a reasonable sum. He confirmed what the Yankee dealer had said, that he had acquired it in a trade.

"Well, we'll take it," said Tom, passing over the money. "Now, how can we get it home?"

It was rather a problem, as the chair was big and clumsy, and they were quite a distance from Randall. But finally, on payment of a further small sum, the dealer offered to deliver it to the college.

"It doesn't seem possible that we've got it," said Tom, as they were on their way back that

afternoon, the Hebrew promising to bring the chair to them on the morrow. "We'll have a celebration in honor of its return."

"Nothing in the fancy eats line until after the big game, I'm afraid," objected Sid. "Kindlings and Lighton will sit down on that. But we'll have a double celebration after we do up Boxer Hall."

"I wish it was to-morrow—I mean, so we could sit in the old chair," went on Phil, almost as eager as a child.

But the chair did not come the next day, and after fretting and worrying, the boys received a badly written, and worse spelled, postal from Mr. Rosenkranz, explaining that his horse was sick, but that he would deliver the chair as soon as the animal was well.

"Say, there's a hoodoo about that chair," declared Tom, as he went out to football practice with his mates.

It was on the morning of the big game with Boxer Hall that an ancient wagon, drawn by a decrepit horse, drove up to Randall College. At first the students were inclined to make game of the outfit, but when Phil and Tom discovered that it was Mr. Rosenkranz with their chair, there was a change of heart. For the belief that the chair might prove to be a mascot or "lucky" hunch had grown.

"There she is!" cried Sid, seeing the old piece

of furniture on the wagon. "Now, up into our room with her, fellows."

"Yes, and don't stop to admire it all day, either," called Kindlings. "I want you in practice right away."

The chums promised, but they could hardly tear themselves away from the room where, once more, reposed the old chair. It looked as natural as it ever had, and its sojourn "in the land of the Philistines," as Tom declared, had apparently not harmed it any.

"I declare, the old clock seems glad to see it back," declared Phil.

"It sures does," agreed Sid, sinking down on the sofa. That piece of furniture seemed to creak and groan out a welcome to its fellow.

"We'll draw lots to see who has the honor of first sitting in the old chair, and then we'll get out on the field," suggested Tom.

He himself drew the lucky number. With something of a little ceremony he made ready to sink down into the depths of the chair. Slowly he let himself back.

A cloud of dust, as of yore, arose around him, making Phil, Sid and Frank sneeze.

"They're greeting you, old chap!" cried Tom to the chair.

He leaned back. His chums, watching him, saw a look of wonder come over his face. Then

his hand went under the seat, and began feeling there. Tom leaped up, raising more dust—a regular cloud.

"What's the matter? A pin stick you?" asked Sid.

"A pin? No. But, say, fellows, this isn't our chair!"

"Not our chair?" echoed Phil.

"Not—not——" faltered Sid.

"Not our chair!" exclaimed Tom, decidedly, as he sat down in it again. "Here, Phil, you try it. It looks like our chair, and it's built like it—upholstery and all—it's a dead ringer, in fact, but it's not *ours!*" and Tom moved aside while Phil got ready to make the test.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A GREAT FIND

THE quarter-back let himself down critically and easily into the chair. He was not in it more than a few seconds, ere he arose quickly.

"It seems to fit, just as our chair did," he said, with a puzzled air. "I can't tell——"

"It's *not* our chair," insisted Tom. "Of course when you sit in it it doesn't feel any different. But look here!"

He tilted it over backwards with a sudden motion.

"What are you trying to do?" indignantly demanded Sid. "Break it?"

"I'm going to look under the seat," replied Tom. "Don't you remember how I nailed a board on last term to hold it together?"

"That's right," agreed Sid. "And I put on a cleat near the back legs. See if that's there, Tom."

Tom had the underside of the chair exposed to view now. Eagerly the lads peered forward. To

their gaze was presented no indiscriminately-nailed-on boards or cleats, which they so well remembered. Instead, there was a smooth brown covering of cloth, such as is put under most upholstered chairs.

"What did I tell you?" cried Tom, in triumph. "I knew this wasn't our chair as soon as I sat in it and ran my hand under it. You could feel the board I put on, and when that was missing I knew something was wrong."

"You're right, old man!" exclaimed Phil. "But if this isn't our chair, we've got its twin brother. I never saw two more alike. But if it isn't ours, whose is it?"

"And where's yours?" asked Frank Simpson. "This mystery is only beginning, fellows."

"That dealer gave us the wrong chair," said Tom. "He must have another one in his shop."

"I don't believe so," declared Phil. "If he had had two he'd have mentioned it when we were out there. Besides, we would have seen it. Frank, are you sure this is the chair you saw in the shop window of that Yankee dealer?"

"No, I can't be sure of it, of course. It looks like it, though."

"Well, we certainly are up against it," declared Tom. "Wait a minute, I'll soon find out what it means."

He started from the room.

"Where you going?" called Sid.

"I'm going to see Rosenkranz and ask him about this mix-up."

"It's too late," declared Phil. "Rosenkranz is quite a distance toward home by this time. We'll see him later—to-morrow, after the game. But it sure is a queer mix-up. Who'd ever suppose there was another chair like ours."

"This one is newer," announced Tom, who had turned it right side up again, and was critically examining it.

"Not newer, I guess," said Phil. "Only it hasn't had the usage ours got. This is evidently of the same vintage, but has been reposing in some one's back parlor for centuries, with the curtains down and the blinds closed to keep out the sun. But a fair exchange is no robbery, and I don't know but what we're just as well off. We have a better chair than ours."

"I'd rather have our own," declared Sid.

"So would I," added Tom. "It sat easier," and he dropped into the chair, and lolled back critically.

"Here, give me a show at it," begged Sid. "I haven't had my sitting yet."

Tom arose reluctantly, and, as he did so, there came a knock on the door.

"Come!" cried Phil.

It was Wallops, the messenger.

"If you please," he said, "Captain Woodhouse wants you gentlemen to come out on the gridiorn at once, for practice."

"Of course!" cried Tom. "We were nearly forgetting that in the excitement over the chair. Tell the captain we'll be right out."

There was hard, snappy practice against the unfortunate scrub, and as it progressed the captain and coach looked more gratified than at any time that season.

"They're fit, all right," declare Kindlings, with sparkling eyes.

"I think they'll do," agreed Mr. Lighton, "but you've got the fight of your life ahead of you, old man."

"I know it—but we'll win!"

Tom and his three chums returned from practice for a brief rest before the game. It was a holiday, with no lessons or lectures to mar the sport.

"First shot at the chair!" cried Tom, as he burst into the room. He threw himself into the big piece of upholstered furniture. There was a sudden cracking, breaking and tearing sound, and the whole bottom of the chair seemed to drop out. A cloud of dust arose. Tom was like a person who had sat upon a barrel, the head of which had collapsed.

"Oh, wow!" he cried, as he vainly struggled

to get up. "I say, can't some of you fellows give me a hand?"

"What's the matter, hurt?" asked Phil, anxiously.

"No, but I'm wedged in here as if I'd sat on a drum."

They pulled him out, and through the settling cloud of dust gazed at the ruin.

"Now you have gone and done it," said Sid, reproachfully.

"I guess I have," admitted Tom, regretfully, as he moved the chair to one side. Several of the bottom boards were on the floor. On top of them, amid a little pile of dirt and splinters, was a folded paper. Tom picked it up. He knocked the dust from it and slowly and wonderingly read several lines of writing on the front, and, as he read, a look of bewilderment came over his face.

"Why—why, fellows!" he exclaimed. "Look —look here! A deed—an old deed given by Simon Hess to Jacob Randall, in consideration of —and so forth and so forth—for the purpose of —um—setting aside land on which to erect a college. Why, great Cæsar's grandmother's pumpkin pie!" almost yelled Tom, "this is the missing quit-claim deed that everyone is looking for! The deed on which the title to the college depends! It was in that old chair!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE EXCITED STRANGER

AT FIRST, Tom's chums did not know whether or not he was joking. They crowded around him and looked over his shoulder as he unfolded the paper. The inner contents bore out the endorsement on the face of the document.

"That's it, all right!" cried Frank. "It's the quit-claim deed, as sure as you're a foot high!"

"And does possession of it mean that Randall College is all right?" asked Sid.

"Sure!" asserted Tom.

"But how in the world did it ever get inside that chair?" demanded Phil. "This is the greatest mystery yet. The loss of our chair and clock aren't in it."

"I should say not!" agreed Frank.

"What had we better do?" asked Sid.

"Get this deed into the hands of Dr. Churchill as soon as possible," decided Tom. "He'll lock it in the safe, whence it can't disappear again, and then they'll call off the suit against Randall.

I guess this will put a crimp in Lawyer Langridge, all right."

"Who was this Jacob Randall mentioned in the deed?" asked Frank, who was carefully reading the document.

"Oh, he was some relative to the Randall who founded the college," declared Phil. "Randall, the founder, got it later, and endowed the college. Jove! but this is a great find, all right, eh, fellows?"

"It's a good thing I came down hard in that seat, or we'd never found the deed," went on Tom. "Otherwise we might have traded back this chair for our own, and never would have known a thing about the quit-claim."

"But where *is* our chair?" asked Sid. "And how in the name of the sacred cow did the deed get in the seat of this one?"

"Say, don't ask any more questions, or I'll go batty," declared Tom. "Come on, let's take this deed to Prexy right away."

It was such a momentous occasion that nothing less than a full delegation of the four "guardsmen" could do justice to it, so the quartette of chums invaded the office of Dr. Churchill, to that gentleman's no small amazement. On the way our heroes met several of their chums, but they did not mention their find, thinking it best to let the proper authorities know of it first.

"Ahem! Is this a strike, gentlemen?" asked the president, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"It's a 'find'!" exclaimed Tom, and he held out the deed.

To say that Dr. Churchill was surprised would be but faintly to express it. He eagerly questioned the boys, who as eagerly answered, telling the story of their missing clock and chair from the beginning.

"I can't understand it," went on the president, with a puzzled shake of his head. "But I'll take good care of this quit-claim deed, and we can make inquiries later. You have rendered a service to Randall to-day, gentlemen, that she will not soon forget. I thank you personally, and, later, I will see that you receive the recognition you deserve."

"Come on!" whispered Tom to his chums, for the good old doctor was much affected. "It's nearly time for the game, and we don't want to miss that."

Murmuring over and over again his thanks at the unexpected discovery, Dr. Churchill locked the deed in the safe, stating that he would take immediate steps to have the court matters brought to a close, if possible.

"For this, I think, settles forever the title of Randall College," he said. "We are now secure."

Tom and his chums hurried back to their room.

Dr. Churchill had requested them to say nothing for a little while regarding the finding of the deed.

"Now for Boxer Hall," remarked Phil, grimly, as he looked at his watch. "They'll begin to arrive in about an hour."

Wallops, the messenger, stepped toward our friends.

"There's a gentleman just gone up to your room," he said. "He was inquiring for you, and I sent him up. He said he'd wait outside until you came back from the president's office."

"Who is he?" asked Tom. "Maybe it's some of our folks, fellows, come to see the big game."

"No, I think he is a stranger," remarked the messenger.

Wondering who could be paying them a visit at this time, our heroes hastened their steps. Outside, in the corridor, they saw a man excitedly pacing up and down. He approached them eagerly.

"Are you Mr. Parsons, Mr. Clinton, and—er——" He paused, as if trying to remember the other names.

"Simpson and Henderson," finished Tom. "Did you want to see us?"

"Indeed I do, very much! Did you receive a big chair from a dealer named Rosenkranz, a few days ago?"

"We received it to-day," spoke Phil. "Why?"

"May I look at it?" went on the man, eagerly. "I have reason to think that it is mine, and that I have yours."

"At last!" murmured Tom. "Once more on the trail of the mystery at last! Like a prima donna's final-final concert. Yes, you may see the chair, and welcome."

He opened the door of their room, and at the first glance inside, the stranger noted the chair.

"Yes, that's mine!" he cried, eagerly.

"That's what *we* thought—at first," spoke Sid, calmly.

The stranger paid no attention to the boys now. He went over to the chair, in the bottom part of which the boards had again been fitted loosely. The man put his hand underneath, and, as he did so, the boards fell down once more.

"What's this!" he cried. "Someone has been tampering with my chair! There is something missing! Something valuable! Did you lads take anything from this chair?"

"What might it have been?" inquired Tom, calmly, motioning to his chums to keep silent.

"A paper—a document—a valuable document! Did you take it?"

"We found a certain paper," replied Tom. "I sat in the chair a little too hard, the boards dropped, and there was a paper in there."

"It's mine! Where is it now? I demand it!"

"Easy," counseled Tom. "Do you know what that paper was?"

"I should say I do! Give it to me at once! You may keep the chair if you like, but give me the paper!"

The man was getting more and more excited.

"That paper," said Tom, calmly, "was a missing quit-claim deed to property owned by Randall College. The loss of it entailed a lawsuit which is still pending. We found the deed, and, of course, that brings the suit to an end."

"Where is that deed?" demanded the man, angrily. "It was in my chair, and I want it."

"It was in the chair—it isn't now," said Tom. "It is where you can't get it—in Dr. Churchill's safe, and Randall College is rid of her enemies!"

"Give—me—back—my—deed!" fairly howled the man.

He seemed as if he would strike Tom, but the plucky end faced him fearlessly. Suddenly from outside came a burst of cheers. They welled to the ears of our heroes.

"The Boxer Hall crowd!" exclaimed Phil. "They're here for the big game! Come on, fellows! Now to play for our lives!"

Once again came the burst of cheers. Looking from their windows, our friends could see a crowd of Boxer Hall students, arriving in big stages, which they had hired. Their cries of

greeting and defiance were answered by those of the Randall lads, who came pouring out on the campus.

"My deed—where is my deed? Give it to me!" repeated the stranger, eagerly.

Tom turned on him like a flash.

"Look here!" the end cried. "I don't know you, and I don't know what your game is. But I *do* know that we've got the deed, and that we're going to keep it. Now, you get out of here, and don't come back. We're going to play football, and if you want to make any claim, you go to the Randall lawyers. Now—vamoose!"

Tom pointed to the door. The man looked at him defiantly, and seemed about to leap at the lad. Then, with a slinking glance, he departed.

"Well," remarked Phil, as the echoes of his footsteps died away down the corridor, "what do you think of that?"

"Isn't it the limit?" demanded Sid.

"Worse and more of it," added Frank. "I wonder——"

"No time to wonder now," interrupted Tom, briskly. "We haven't anything to worry about from that chap. The deed is safe. Now, come on, get into our togs, and wipe up the ground with Boxer Hall."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN

WHAT a crowd there was! It seemed to surge all over the grandstands, hiding the boards from sight, so that the structure looked like a solid mass of human beings. Old men there were, and elderly ladies, too, and young men—and maidens —girls, girls, girls, everywhere, their pretty hats and bright wraps making the otherwise dull and cloudy day seem like a fairy garden.

Nearly everyone from Fairview Institute was on hand, and the girls sat together, chanting songs —sometimes for Randall and sometimes for Boxer Hall. The former contingent was led by the friends of our heroes, Miss Tyler, Miss Harrison and Miss Clinton.

It was almost time for the game to start, and Bean Perkins had led his crowd of shouters, cheerers and singers in various calls and melodies. Out on the field were the players, nearly two score of them, for each college had plenty of substitutes.

"It's going to be a game for blood, all right," murmured Tom, who, standing with his three

chums, watched Boxer Hall at practice. "Look how they get into play on the jump."

"Oh, we can do it, too," declared Phil.

"They've got some good kickers," announced Sid, critically.

"So have we," fired back Phil, who seemed to resent any implied slight of the Randall team.

"Have you heard where Langridge is going to play?" asked Frank Simpson.

"Against me, someone said," replied Tom. "He's been shifted to right end, I hear, and I wish he wasn't. There'll be some scrapping, sure."

"Don't let him get your goat," advised Phil.

Speculation as to the position of the players was soon set at rest, when the list was announced This was the lineup.

BOXER HALL	POSITION	RANDALL
Ford Enderby	*Left end*	Tom Parsons
Dave Ogden	*Left tackle*	Bert Bascome
George Stoddard	*Left guard*	Frank Simpson.
Paul Davenport	*Centre*	Holly Cross
Lynn Rallings	*Right guard.*	Billy Housenlager
Ed Dwight	*Right tackle*	Dan Woodhouse
Fred Langridge	*Right end*	Jerry Jackson
Tom Miller	*Quarter-back*	Phil Clinton
Fred Cooper	*Right half-back*	Pete Backus
Charles Baker	*Left half-back*	Sid Henderson
William Cook	*Full-back*	Joe Jackson

It was stated that two halves of thirty minutes each would be played, and it was also known that some of the old-time rules, as regarded play, would be used, for the Tonaka Lake League had their own ideas on this subject.

The crowd continued to increase, and when Captain Miller, of Boxer Hall, and Captain Woodhouse, of Randall, met for a conference, the stands had overflowed into the field, where the officers had trouble keeping the crowd back of the ropes.

Boxer won the toss, and there was a momentary feeling of disappointment at this, but it soon passed away, for there was no wind, and little advantage to be gained by selecting a goal.

"I'm glad we've got 'em on our own grounds," remarked Tom, in a low voice.

"Yes, that's one advantage," agreed Phil. "Oh, if we can only win, old man—if we only can! Then Randall will come into her own again, and down all her enemies."

"We're *going* to win," said Tom, simply, as if that settled it.

Boxer elected to defend the south goal, which gave the ball to Randall to be kicked off. Holly Cross topped it on a little mound of dirt. He looked to Kindlings for a confirmatory nod, which the captain gave, after a glance at his men. The Boxer Halls were on the alert. The whistle of

the referee blew, and Holly's toe made a dent in the new yellow ball. Away it sailed far into Boxer's territory. Langridge made the catch, and started over the chalk marks with speed, protected by good interference. But with a fierceness which it seemed that nothing could stop, Tom Parsons circled in, and made one of the best tackles of his career, as he brought his old enemy down with a thud to the ground, on Boxer's thirty-eight yard line.

"Now the real battle begins," murmured Tom, as he ran to his place, while the opponents of Randall lined up, the quarter-back singing out his signal.

Fred Cooper was given the ball, and made a try at getting around Randall's right end, but Jerry Jackson and his support were right there, and Cooper was nailed, after a gain of about four yards. It was a splendid defense on the part of Randall, and her cohorts were glad, for Boxer had some big players that year, and there was fear that she would smash through. In fact, so fearful was Captain Miller after that first try that he called for a kick.

It was well done, and Cook sent the pigskin sailing far back toward Randall's goal posts. Joe Jackson caught it, and began a run which brought the crowd to its feet as if by magic, while thousands of throats yelled encouragement, and Bean

Perkins broke his cane to slivers, in his excitement. Past man after man of the Boxer team did Joe dodge, until he was nearly in the centre of the field before he was downed.

"Now's our chance," murmured Phil, as he knelt to take the pigskin when Holly should snap it back.

Phil signaled for Sid Henderson to take the ball, and take it Sid did, smashing through the Boxer line for five yards. Joe Jackson was next called upon, and proved a good ground-gainer. Then came the turn of Pete Backus, who got into action on the jump. In less than three minutes of play Randall had ripped out seventeen yards through the hardest sort of a defense, and this exhibition of skill, pluck and line-smashing was a revelation to those who had feared for their favorite college. It was disheartening to Boxer Hall. Randall had had no need to kick.

Another signal came, and Frank Simpson, with a tremendous heave, opened up a big hole for Joe Jackson to dart through. Then, and not until then, did Boxer prove that she could hold, for, in response to the frantic appeals of her captain, his men stopped Joe, after a small gain.

Then came some kicking, and Boxer had the ball again. With desperate energy she began at her smashing tactics once more, and to such advantage that she was advancing the leather well

up the field. Something seemed to be the matter with Randall. She was giving way—a slump.

"Hold! hold! Hold 'em!" pleaded Dan Woodhouse.

His men braced, but either they did not work together, or they braced at the wrong moment, for on came Boxer Hall. Right up the field they went, until they were only twenty yards away from the Randall goal line.

There were glum feelings in the hearts of the supporters of the yellow and maroon, and wild, delirious joy in the ranks of the enemies, for the stands were rioting with cheers and songs, while above all came the deep-throated demand for:

"Touchdown! Touchdown!"

"And they'll get it, too, if we don't stop 'em," thought Tom, in despair. He had been playing well, and taking care of all the men who came his way, but that was all he could do.

Then Randall braced, and, in the nick of time, and held to such advantage that Boxer had to kick. Joe Jackson caught the ball, and was gathering himself for a run back, when Langridge, who had broken through with incredible swiftness, tackled him, almost in the very spot where the Randall full-back had grabbed the pigskin. Langridge and Joe went down in a heap, and how it happened, Joe, with tears in his eyes, later,

could not explain. But the leather rolled away from him.

Like a flash Langridge was up, had picked the ball from the ground, and amid a perfect pandemonium of yells, was sprinting for Randall's goal, with not a man between him and the last chalk mark.

It was almost a foregone conclusion that he would touch down the ball, and he did, though Tom sprinted after him, with such running as he had seldom done before. But to no avail.

To the accompaniment of a whirlwind of cheers, Langridge made the score, and then calmly sat on the ball, while the others rushed at him. But he was safe from attack.

Oh, the bitterness in the hearts of the Randall lads! It was as gall and wormwood to them, while they lined up behind their goal posts and watched Lynn Rallings kick the goal.

"Six to nothing against us," murmured Phil, with a sob in his throat. "Oh, fellows——"

He could not go on, but walked silently back to the middle of the field.

"Now, boys, give 'em the 'Wallop' song!" cried Bean Perkins, with a joyousness that was only assumed, and the strains of that jolly air welled out over the field, mingling with the triumphant battle cries of Boxer.

But the Randall players heard, and it put some

heart into them. The game went on, with slight gains on either side, for ten minutes more. There were forward passes and on-side kicks tried, and an exchange of punts. Once Randall was penalized for holding, and twice Boxer had the ball taken from her for off-side plays. The leather was kept near the middle of the field, and it was evident that a most stubborn battle would mark the remainder of the championship game. Yet the advantage of first scoring was with Boxer, and it gave them additional strength, it seemed.

"Fellows, we *must* get a touchdown!" declared Kindlings, with tears in his eyes, when time was called, as Charles Baker was knocked out, and Ted Sanders went in as the Boxer left half.

Randall had the ball, and with the energy of despair, was rushing it down the field. The loss of Baker, who was one of the mainstays of the Boxer team, seemed to affect Randall's opponents, for they apeared to crumple under the smashing attack directed at them. In turn, Sid, Pete and Joe rushed through the holes torn for them. They seemed resistless, and the sight brought forth a round of cheers.

"Now for the 'Conquer or Die' song," called Bean, hoarsely, leaping to his feet and waving his battered cane and the tattered ribbons. "Now's the time. We need that touchdown they're going to get!"

His voice carried to the struggling players, for there was a moment of silence. Then, as the grand Latin strains broke forth, they seemed to electrify Tom and his chums. The players fairly jumped at the opposing line.

Within two yards of the goal chalk mark Pete Backus was given the ball. With tremendous strength, the big Californian opened a hole for him. Pete slipped through, and staggered forward. Cook, the Boxer full, tried to tackle him, and did get him down, but, with a wiggle and a squirm, Pete was free, and the next instant had made the touchdown.

Randall's supporters went wild with delight, and Bean could not shout for some time after the fearful and weird yells he let loose. He had to take some throat lozenges to relieve the strain.

There was some disappointment when the goal was missed, leaving the score six to five, in favor of Boxer. But Randall felt that she now had the measure of her opponents.

The rest of the half was finished, with neither side scoring again, and then came a period of much-needed rest, for the lads had played with fierce energy.

The opening of the second half was rather slow. The ball changed hands several times, and it seemed as if both sides were playing warily for an opening.

"Fellows, we've just *got* to get another touchdown," declared Kindlings. "That one point may beat us."

"We'll get it," asserted Phil, when time was being taken out to enable Sid Henderson to get back his wind, for he had been knocked out by a fierce tackle.

Then the battle was resumed. Up to now, Tom and his old enemy, Langridge, had not clashed much, though Langridge kept up a running fire of low-voiced, insulting talk against Tom, to which our hero did not reply.

"He's only trying to get my goat," Tom explained to Frank Simpson. Then came a play around Tom's end, when Boxer had the ball, and Langridge deliberately punched his opponent. Like a flash, Tom drew back his arm to return the blow, and then he realized that he was in the game, and he got after the man with the ball. Following the scrimmage, he said, with quiet determination:

"Langridge, if you do that again, I'll smash you in the eye," and from the manner of saying it, Langridge knew he would carry it out. Thereafter he was more careful.

Try as Randall did, she could not seem to get the ball near enough to make an attempt for a field goal, or to rush it over for a touchdown. On the other hand, Boxer was equally unable to

make the needful gains. There was much kicking, and the time was rapidly drawing to a close.

"We've *got* to do it! We've *got* to do it! We've *got* to do it!" said the captain over and over again. He begged and pleaded with his men. The coach urged them in all the terms of which he was master.

There were but two minutes more of play, and Randall had the ball. It was within twenty-five yards of the Boxer goal, and one attempt to rush it through guard and tackle had resulted in only a little gain.

It was a critical moment, for on the next few plays depended the championship of the league. Phil was doing some rapid thinking. Sid had just had the ball, and had failed to gain. In fact, the plucky left half-back had not fully recovered from the effects of a fierce tackle.

"They won't expect him to come at them again," thought Phil. "But I wonder if old Sid can do it. I'm going to try him."

The quarter-back was rattling off the signal. Somewhat to his surprise, Sid heard himself called upon for another trial. He almost resented it, for he was very weary, and his ears were buzzing from weakness.

And then he heard that song—the song that always seemed to nerve Randall to a last effort. The Latin words came sweetly over the field from

the cohorts on the big stand—*"Aut Vincere, Aut, Mori!"*—"Either We Conquer, or We Die!"

"Might as well die, as to be defeated," thought Sid, bitterly. The ball came back to him. Like a flash he was in motion. The big Californian, as he had done before several times in the game, opened a hole so fiercely that the opposing players seemed to shrink away from him.

Forward leaped Sid, with all the power of despair. Forward! Forward!

"There! See!" cried Bean Perkins. "He's through the line! He's going to make a touchdown—the winning touchdown!"

Sid *was* through. Staggering and weak, but through. Between him and the coveted goal line now was but one player—the Boxer full-back—William Cook. He crouched, waiting for Sid, but there were few better dodgers than this same Sid. On he came, wondering if his wind and legs would hold out for the race he had yet to run—a race with glory at the end—or bitter defeat on the way.

Cook was opening and shutting his hands, in eager anticipation of grasping Sid. His jaw was set, his eyes gleamed. On came the half-back, gathering momentum with every stride, until, just as Cook thought he had him, Sid dodged to one side, and kept on. There was now a clear field ahead of him, and he was urged forward by the

frantic yells of his fellow players and the wild, shouting crowds on the stands. Not a person was seated. They were all standing up, swaying, yelling, imploring, or praying, that Sid would keep on—or fall or be captured before he crossed that magical white line.

Sid kept on. Then there came a different yell. It was from the Boxer stands. Tom, picking himself out from a heap of players, saw Langridge sprinting after Sid. And how the former bully of Randall did run!

"Oh, Sid! Go on! Go on!" implored Tom, in a whisper, as if the youth could hear him.

And Sid went on. After him, fiercely, came Langridge. The distance between them lessened. Sid was staggering. His brain was reeling. His legs tottered. The ball seemed about to slip from his grasp, and he found himself talking to it, as to a thing alive.

"Stay there, now—stay there—don't fall out. And—and you legs—don't you give way—don't you do it! Keep on, old man, keep on! You can do it! You can do it!"

Thus Sid muttered to himself. He heard the patter of the running feet behind him. He did not look to see who was coming—he dared not. He felt that if he took his eyes off the last white line ahead of him that he would stagger and fall.

The line was like the crystal globe that hypnotizes one. It held his gaze.

On, and on, and on——

Sid fell in a heap. His breath left him. There was a darkness before him. Down he went heavily.

But, oh, what a shout came dimly to his ears! What a wild riot of cries! He tried to look down and see whether he had crossed the line before he stumbled, but he could only see the brown earth and green grass. He heard someone still running after him. He lifted his head. There, just before him, was the goal line.

With the energy of despair, he raised the ball in his arms, and placed it over the chalk mark, holding it there with all his remaining strength, when someone threw himself fiercely upon him.

It was Langridge, eager, wrathful and almost beside himself with rage. But he was too late. The ball was well over the last line, and, knowing from the attitude of the Boxer player that it *was* there, the great throng of Randall men and women, young men and maidens, joined in one great cry:

"Touchdown! Touchdown!"

It was—the winning touchdown, for, as the other players, some fearful, some hoping, came rushing up, the final whistle blew, ending the con-

test that had resulted in championship for Randall.

And then, welling over the field once more, came softly the song: "Either We Conquer, or We Die!"

There were bonfires that night at Randall—bonfires in which the football suits were burned, for the eleven broke training in a blaze of glory. Also there were feastings, for there was no ban on eating now. And, likewise, there was much rejoicing. For was not Randall champion again? Had not her loyal sons again won a victory on the gridiron? Therefore, let the gladness go on!

Sid was the lion of the hour. It was his great run—his struggle against long odds—that had won the big game, and he was carried on the shoulders of his mates, and his name was heralded in song and story.

"Oh, it was great, old man, great!" cried Tom, as they walked together from the gymnasium, where there had been a sort of impromptu joy-meeting after the feast.

"Nothing like it ever seen at Randall," declared Phil.

"Nothing like it ever seen *anywhere,*" put in the big Californian.

"I never could have done it, if you hadn't

opened the hole for me, Frank," spoke Sid, gratefully.

"I just had to open that hole," was the retort. "I felt that I'd tear those fellows limb from limb if they didn't give way, and——"

"They did," finished Phil, with a laugh.

They had met their girl friends after the game, and had received their congratulations. Then had come a happy time, walking with them, then the feasting, and now our friends were on their way to their room.

"There are only two things that are bothering me," remarked Tom, thoughtfully.

"What's that—Langridge?" asked Phil. "Say, he must have felt sick when he got to where Sid was, and saw that it was a touchdown, all right! Did he hurt you, Sid?"

"Well, he knocked the wind out of me—that is, what there was left to knock. But I guess he didn't mean to."

"Oh, he meant it, all right," declared Tom. "But I wasn't thinking of Langridge. I was going to say that the two things that bothered me was the mystery of the chair and the clock."

"That's so," came from Phil. "I wonder who that fellow was, and how the deed came to be in his chair?"

"We must tell Prexy about it," decided Sid. "It may have a bearing on the case."

They were deep in a discussion of possible explanations of the various problems that vexed them, when they turned down the corridor that led to their room. There was so much noise going on out on the campus—shouts and yells, and the students circling about the bonfires—that the footsteps of our friends made no sound. That is why they were close upon a figure crouched in front of their door before the kneeling one was aware of their presence. Then the figure started away. But Phil was too quick, and grabbed it.

"I've caught you!" cried the quarter-back. "So you sneaked back, to see if you could find the deed, eh?" for he thought he had the stranger who had before visited them.

"By Jove, it's Lenton!" cried Tom, catching a glimpse of the face of the captive. And indeed it was the odd student who was such an expert with the file.

"And he's got a false key!" added Sid, as he saw a bit of brass in the lad's hand. "Here, you little shrimp, what do you mean?" and Sid shook the lad.

"I—please—I didn't mean anything," was the stammering answer.

"Weren't you trying to get into our room?" demanded Tom.

"Yes, I—I was, but——"

"Where's our chair?" came fiercely from Phil.

"I haven't got it! I never had it."

"Did you take our clock, and afterward exchange it?" asked Tom, determined to solve part of the mystery, if not all.

"Yes, I had it, and I—I was coming back to borrow it again," answered the odd student.

"Borrow it?" repeated Sid.

"Yes, that's all I did with your alarm clock. Oh, fellows, I didn't mean anything wrong. I'll tell you all about it."

"You'd better," said Phil, keeping a hold of the intruder's collar. "Come inside."

They entered the room, and Tom locked the door.

"Well?" asked Phil, suggestively, as he pointed out a chair to Lenton. "We're ready to hear you."

"I borrowed your clock to take a wheel out," said the odd student, simply.

"To take a wheel out?" repeated Sid, in amazement.

"Yes. In an alarm clock there is a certain size cog wheel that I could find nowhere else. Fellows, I am making a new kind of static electric machine, and I needed a certain sized wheel. I tried everywhere to get one, and I couldn't afford to pay for having one made. Then, one day, I happened to see your alarm clock in here. I thought, perhaps, that it would have in it the wheel I

wanted. I made a false key, sneaked in, and took the clock out. Then I happened to think you'd want a timepiece, so I brought in that mahogany one—it was a present to me from a friend in Chicago, but I didn't care for it. The wheels weren't right."

"I guess *you've* got wheels," murmured Phil.

"Your alam clock had just the right size wheel in it," went on the odd student, "so I took it out, and made my electrical machine. Then I made another wheel that would answer as well in your clock, and I made the exchange back again. Now my electrical machine is broken, and I need another wheel from your clock, and——"

"You were going to sneak in again and take it," broke in Sid.

"Yes. I made another false key, for I accidentally left the first one in the door when you came and surprised me, the day I brought your clock back."

"Why didn't you *ask* us for the clock?" inquired Tom.

"Because I was afraid you wouldn't let me take it. I heard the fellows say how fond you were of it. I thought you wouldn't miss a wheel from it, if I gave you a better clock."

"*Another* one—not a *better,*" insisted Phil. "But did you drop a letter in here one day?"

"Yes, I did, to Bert Bascome, and I wondered what had become of it."

"We found it," said Tom. "Was there something in it about a clock.

"Yes, I bought an expensive alarm clock from Bert, but I wrote rather sharply to tell him it wasn't any good. It had the wrong kind of wheels. Bascome was mad at me for not keeping it to pay off some of the money he owes me. That's all there is to tell."

"And it's enough," declared Sid. "I guess that explains everything. Bascome's denial was justified."

"And we thought Langridge had a hand in it," went on Phil. "But there is still the chair and deed to be explained."

"I don't know anything about the chair," insisted Lenton, and they believed him. "But could I have——" he hesitated.

"Do you want the clock?" asked Tom.

"I—I just want to take out one of the wheels. I'll put in another just as good," promised Lenton, eagerly. And they let him have the battered timepiece.

"Now, if we could only explain the chair matter as easily, all would be well," commented Phil, when Lenton had gone.

They had not long to wait. A little later a message summoned them to the office of Dr.

Churchill. The president greeted them pleasantly.

"I have just had the lawyers here," he said, "and they state that the quit-claim deed which you boys found is genuine, and the very one that was missing. It brings to an end the suit against the college, and I wish to once more thank you lads. The prohibition of silence is now removed, and you are at liberty to tell your friends the good news."

"But you have not heard it all," said Tom, and he told about the visit of the excited stranger just before the game.

"I think I can explain that," went on the president, with a smile, "and also tell you where to find your chair."

"Can you?" cried the three, eagerly.

"Your visitor was a Mr. James Lawson," continued Dr. Churchill, "and he was the one who made the claim against the college, being a distant heir of Simon Hess. Without the quit-claim deed being available to us, he was the ostensible owner of our property. How he got possession of the deed he would not say, though the lawyers and I questioned him."

"Was he here?" asked Phil.

"Yes, your actions evidently frightened him, for he called a little while ago to say that he gave up all claims to the land. He stated that he thought he had a right to the deed."

"How did it get in the old chair?" asked Tom.

"Being an heir of Simon Hess," went on the doctor, "this Mr. Lawson had some of the old family furniture. Among the pieces was a chair, similar to yours, which I understand was also a Hess heirloom. Your chair was taken by a man whom we engaged temporarily to do some janitor work. He sold it to a second-hand dealer, and I have only to-night learned his name and address. The janitor was dismissed shortly after being hired, as it was found that he was dishonest. To-day I received a letter from him, begging forgiveness, and telling about the chair he sold from your room. But he did not mention a clock, for I understand you also lost a timepiece."

"Oh, we have that back," said Tom. "But about the chair?"

"I'll come to that, and tell you where to get yours. It seems that Mr. Lawson retained possession of the quit-claim deed, which he would not tell how he obtained.

"One night, when looking it over in his home, near Rosedale, he was interrupted by an unexpected visitor. Not wishing his caller to see the deed, he slipped it under the lining of the seat of the old chair. Business matters came up immediately afterward, and he went out, forgetting about the document, which was left in the seat.

"The next day his wife, who liked new instead

of old furniture, sold the old armchair to a second-hand dealer, deed and all, though, of course, she did not know of the paper. Naturally, when Mr. Lawson heard of his loss, he was frantic, for on the deed his whole claim depended. He intended to destroy the document to prevent it ever being found by anyone so that it would benefit Randall. But he reckoned without fate, which stepped in most opportunely. He sought the old chair, but it had gone from dealer to dealer, until finally a Mr. Rosenkranz got it.

"You obtained it from him just before Mr. Lawson called to claim his furniture, and later he came on to the college. The rest fits in with what you already know."

"Well, wouldn't that——" began Tom, and then he happened to remember that he was in the president's presence, and he stopped.

"Your old chair is at this place," went on Dr. Churchill, giving the address of a small dealer in a nearby city. "You may go and get it any time you like," the good doctor concluded. "And now I think that this clears up the mystery. But, before you go, let me congratulate you on the magnificent victory of this afternoon. The nine did exceedingly well."

The president smiled benignly, unconscious of the "break" he had made in calling the eleven a "nine," and the boys, joyful over the prospect of

an early recovery of their chair, left the office. At last the mystery was ended.

There was more rejoicing in Randall when the facts regarding the quit-claim deed became known, and the next day formal notice of the withdrawal of the suit was filed. There was some talk about prosecuting Mr. Lawson, but there was a doubt as to his real criminality, so nothing was done.

And thus ended the troubles of Randall, not only from a legal standpoint, but also from an athletic, for her title to the championship of the gridiron was firmly established. But there were other battles of the field to come, and those who are interested in them may read thereof in the next volume of the series, to be called: "For the Honor of Randall; a Story of College Athletics."

"They look like twins, don't they?" remarked Tom, a few evenings later, when, having recovered their own chair, it was placed beside the one left by Mr. Lawson, for he did not come to claim it.

"Yes, if we had two more, we'd have a collection, and there'd be one apiece," added Phil.

"Oh, the sofa's good enough for me," came from Sid. "I hope nobody borrows that to take out a wheel, or some of the stuffing."

"And the clock ticks as naturally as it always did," commented Phil, as he took a seat in one

of the easy chairs, for Lenton had returned the timepiece.

"And they lived happily forever after," murmured Tom, now half asleep, for it was warm in the room. "I say, are you fellows going to the next Fairview frat. dance?"

"Are we? Wild horses can't hold us back!" cried Sid, with energy.

"Good!" murmured Tom, still more sleepily, and then, as the chums lapsed into silence, there sounded the loud and insistent ticking of the battered alarm clock.

THE END

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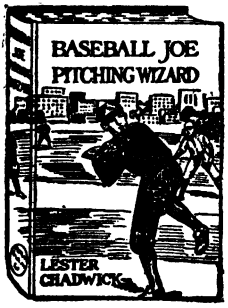

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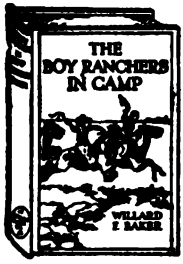

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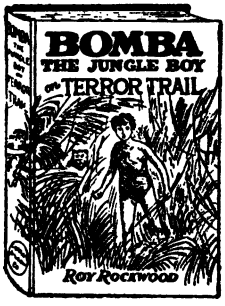

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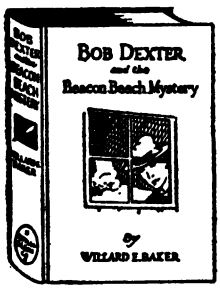

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